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1914

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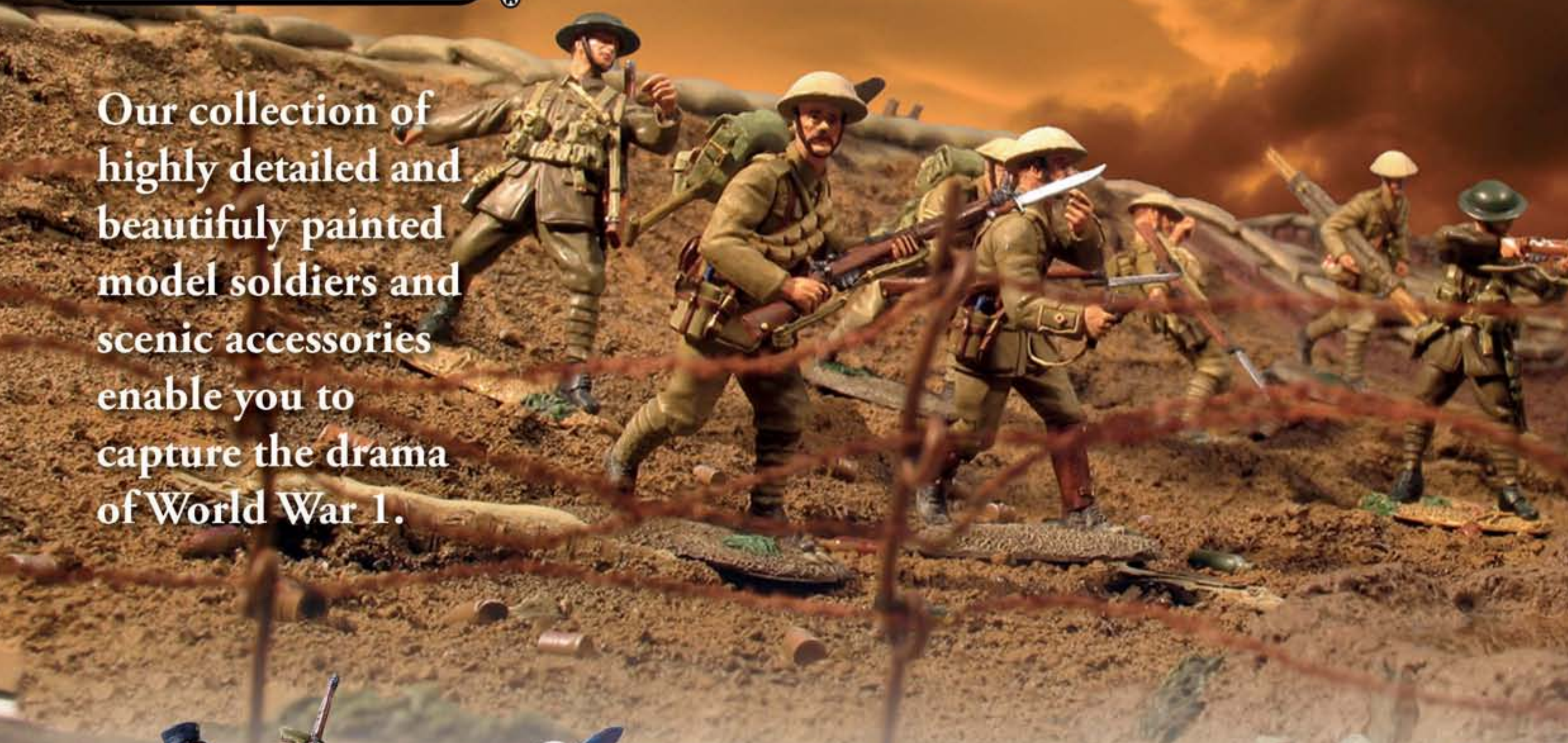

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THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1914

IT WAS said that Europe sleepwalked into war in the summer of 1914. Whilst the great Powers had been arming throughout the early years of the twentieth century in expectation of a European conflict, when war was actually declared on 4 August it was still a shock. Even greater shocks were to follow as the people of the United Kingdom responded to the threat they faced and adjusted to the prospect of a prolonged world war.

Very quickly a British Expeditionary Force was shipped to France to take part in the great offensive that would knock the Germans out of the war. Almost from the start the Allied plan began to fall apart. The overwhelming might of the most populous nation on the Continent compelled the British and French forces to withdraw. Then came the "miracle" of the Battle of the Marne. The Germans were held. They retreated to the line of the River Aisne and began to dig in. There they would remain for four more years.

The British Empire stretched around the globe and from its colonies and dominions volunteers joined the colours to fight for the mother country. The colonial troops attacked the German territories of Togoland and South-West Africa and from India an expeditionary force captured the oilfields of the Persian Gulf.

At sea the Royal Navy drove the German fleet from the North Sea in battles off Heligoland and Texel; whilst chasing down a German squadron off the Falkland Islands that had defeated and sank a British force in the Battle of Coronel – another unexpected and disastrous event.

With stories and images representing the fighting on the Western Front and overseas, the difficulties at home, with the introduction of the Defence of the Realm Act and the increase in taxes, the first air raids and the bombardment of the East Coast, the first year of the First World War is brought here into sharp and meaningful focus.

Martin Mace

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MAIN PICTURE: **Rescuers try to reach the wreck of HMHS *Rohilla* which ran aground and was lost on 30 October 1914 - see page 83.** (© ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS LTD/MARY EVANS)

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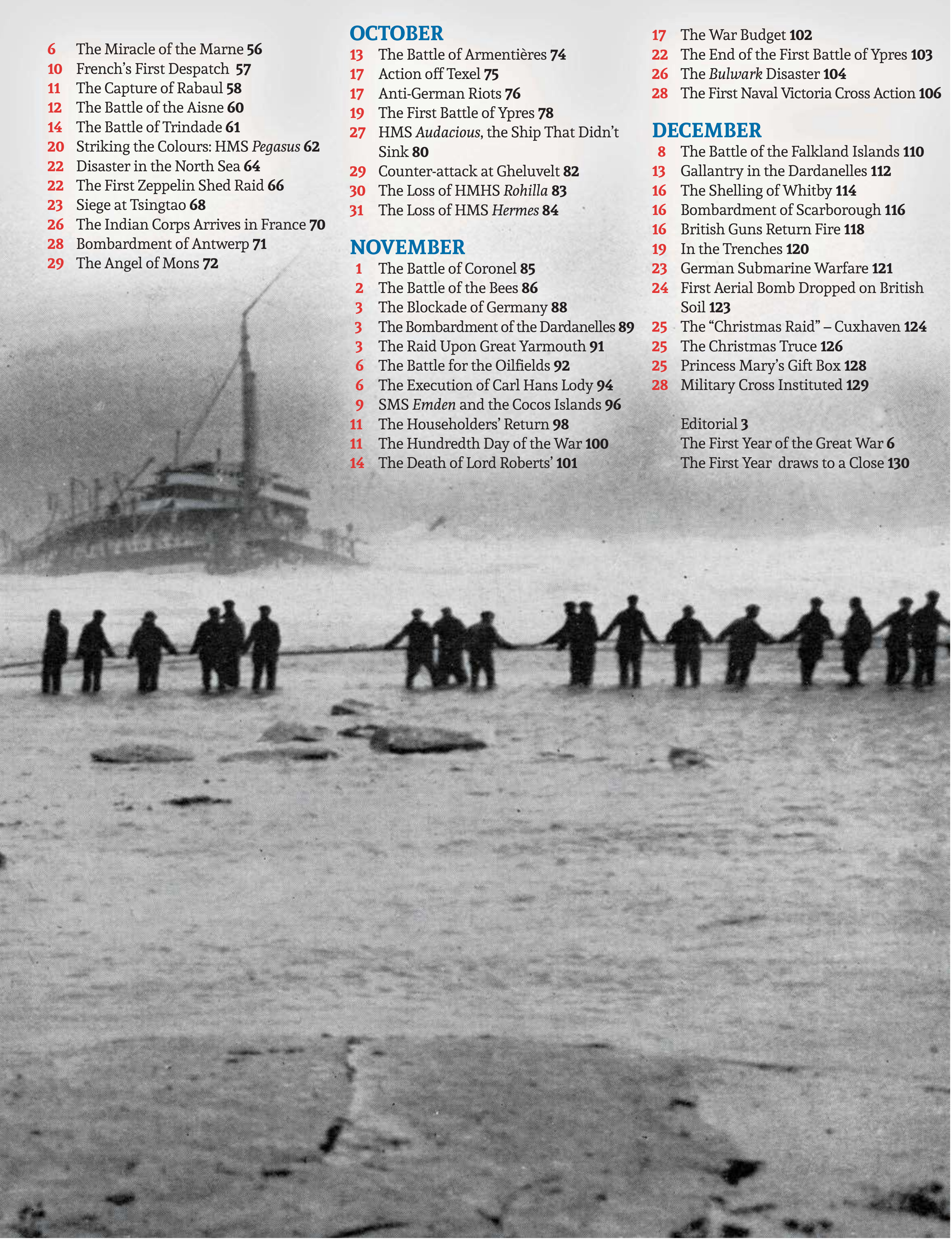


THE FIRST YEAR OF

THOUGH THE first photographs of warfare date back to before the Crimean War soon after the design of portable photographic equipment, public sentiment did not allow for anything other than portraits or after-action shots. Little true expression or depiction of war was seen by the general public. All that changed in 1914.

After the disturbing scenes following the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the first images are of the mass enthusiasm seen as young men clamoured around the recruiting stations. It hardly seems possible to us looking back across the decades, to think of our fathers, grandfathers, or even great-grandfathers jostling each other to rush to war, culminating a month later in the never-to-be-repeated phenomenon of the Pals Battalions. The single most iconic image of that time is, of course, Kitchener's poster appealing to the nation. No greater call could have roused the young men of their day than telling them that their country needed them. The general public's readiness not only to hasten to war but also to accept unprecedented restrictions on their rights and freedoms, manifested itself in the passing of the Defence of the Realm Act. This was to be total war.

Whilst the new recruits were joining the colours, the professionals of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) were marching through France towards Belgium where the German Army was pushing its way westwards. On 22 August the cavalry of the BEF

MAIN PICTURE: **German troops advancing during the fighting in 1914.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **British troops pictured early during the First World War.** (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: **In the last days of July and early August, many European nations mobilised their armed forces. Here, Belgian reservists are pictured following their arrival at the Gare du Nord in Brussels.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE GREAT WAR: 1914

encountered the leading patrols of the German 1st Army, and the first shots of Britain's five-year-long struggle on the Western Front rang out along a quiet road near the town of Mons.

The fighting at sea, by contrast, had already begun. Scarcely had war been declared than the Royal Navy achieved its first success, sinking the German auxiliary minelayer *Königin Luise*, followed a few days later with the destruction of the first U-boat.

Such successes soon seemed of little significance after the great clash of arms at Mons and the subsequent fighting retreat by the BEF to Le Cateau. Though the British Army had not been defeated, it had been overwhelmed by the size and strength of the enemy, as had the French. Not only would the first great conflict of the twentieth century be a total war, it would be on a scale hitherto unimagined.

Wherever the British forces fight, be they on land or sea, some men display a degree of selfless courage that marks out above the rest of the brave soldiers and sailors. So it was that within the early weeks of the war, the first Victoria Crosses were awarded. There was now, also, a new arena for men to display their courage – in the air. For the first time aircraft appeared over the battlefields and the first aerial victory was recorded over Mons.

Mons also was the scene of a strange apparition – heavenly English bowmen driving back the advancing German host – which became known as the Angels of Mons. Though nothing more than the imagination of a novelist, the myth took route in the minds of many men, and later in the war, soldiers would claim numerous times to have had spiritual saviours.

As the fighting progressed, the Germans were eventually held on the River Marne. Their bid to end the war with a rapid advance on Paris had been foiled. Losses had been high on both sides, but at last, from the Allies' perspective, what became known as the Western Front had, to some degree, been stabilized.

ABOVE LEFT: **Casualties pictured after the Battle of Haelen on 12 August 1914. A week after the German invasion, German cavalry had been advancing towards Hasselt and Diest. The Belgian Army's General Headquarters chose the area around the small market town of Haelen as a place to make a stand and delay the enemy. Although a Belgian victory, the battle produced little long term strategic benefit for the Allies.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Though in its day it was termed the Great War, it was indeed a world war and British Empire forces were soon grappling with the enemy in the German West African state of Togoland and in German East Africa. The British and their Japanese allies also laid siege to the German colony of Tsingtao in distant China. The Turkish Ottoman Empire had sided with the Central Powers of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and British warships bombarded the forts at the entrance of the Dardanelles. The oilfields of Persia, also under Ottoman control, were the target of a British and Indian operation which saw the vital port and hinterland of Basra secured for the Allies.

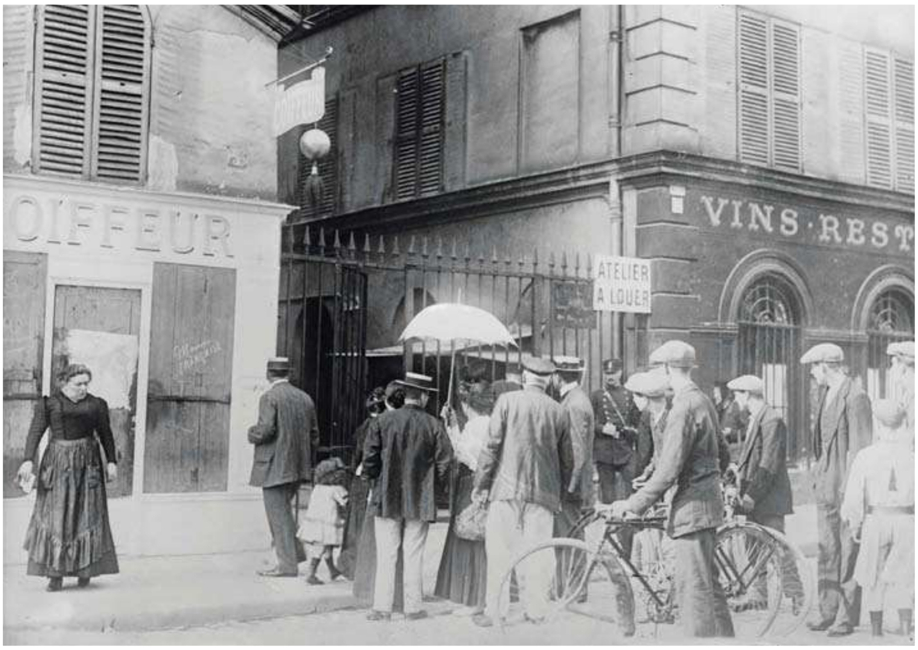
The Royal Navy, the most powerful in the world, was also flexing its muscles. The First Battle of Heligoland Bight saw the Royal Navy sink six German warships, including three cruisers, with another six damaged. Only one Royal Navy warship was damaged in the action. The German auxiliary cruiser SMS *Cap Trafalgar* was engaged and sunk by the British armed merchant cruiser HMS *Carmania* off Trinidad.

ABOVE RIGHT: **The siege of the Belgian city of Antwerp began on 29 September 1914, when German artillery began shelling the outer defences. The Allied garrison included Belgian fortress troops, the Belgian field army and, from 3 October 1914, men of the British Royal Naval Division. Despite the latter's arrival, the city surrendered on the morning of 10 October 1914. The original caption to this image states that it depicts German *Landsturm* (militia or reserve troops) in Antwerp soon after its capitulation.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Such successes, however, were marred by the triple-disaster which occurred on 22 September in the North Sea, when three British cruisers were sunk by the German submarine *U-9*. Likewise the cruiser HMS *Pegasus* was caught in Zanzibar harbour by the German cruiser SMS *Königsberg*. Outranged and outgunned, *Pegasus* was soon disabled, and sunk later the same day, 20 September.

The Royal Navy was no longer just a sea-borne service, it also possessed an aerial element which saw it conduct its first bombing raids in September. There had been great concern that the huge German airships would constitute a serious threat to the United Kingdom and so the aircraft of the Royal Naval Air Service attacked the Zeppelin sheds at Düsseldorf and Cologne on 22 September. The aircraft had their base at Antwerp until it fell to the Germans on 10 October.

Back on the Western Front, the Germans, having been foiled in their attempt to seize Paris had withdrawn to the River Aisne where they began to dig in, the intention being to hold the French territory that they occupied. The British and French, equally determined not to relinquish any ground, also dug defensive trenches. The Germans, though, looked for a way of bypassing the positions on the Aisne by attempting to turn the left wing of the Allies along the Channel coast.



ABOVE: The outbreak of war in August 1914 saw the introduction of aerial bombing, both by airship and aircraft. On 6 August 1914, a German Zeppelin bombed the Belgian city of Liège, killing nine civilians. This was followed by night raids on Antwerp on 25 August and 2 September. During the opening months of the war a German aircraft regularly dropped bombs on Paris – the first raid consisted of five small bombs and a note demanding the immediate surrender of Paris and the French nation. Here a small crowd has gathered to see where a bomb had fallen in Rue des Récollets, Paris. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: Before the stagnation of the Western Front, German aircraft made a number of raids on Paris, on at least one occasion damaging the Notre Dame Cathedral. One newspaper on 14 October 1914, carried this report: "It has transpired that the bomb which was dropped from a German aeroplane on to the roof of the famous Notre Dame Cathedral on Sunday set fire to a beam, but the flames were quickly extinguished." (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

HOTEL
CIGARES

ABOVE: German cavalry on the move through Antwerp. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

As the Germans pushed their forces ever westwards, so the British responded and the "race to the sea" began which saw the opposing trench systems driven all the way to the Belgium coast. This culminated in the struggle for possession of the key communications hub that was the city of Ypres. The German advance was held at the First Battle of Ypres and both sides dug in once more, determined not to concede another inch of ground.

Back in the UK, the war had raised strong emotions and, in some cases, the anger was vented against enemy nationals living in Britain. This included assaults on suspected Germans and the looting of stores owned by people with German-sounding names. One consequence was that, in time, German Shepherd dogs were renamed "Alsatians".

The Royal Navy continued to experience setbacks. On 1 November 1914, a Royal Navy squadron was engaged by a German force off Coronel on the coast of Chile. Two British armoured cruisers were lost in the ensuing battle. Revenge, though, was swift.

Just a month later a much larger Royal Navy squadron caught up with the German warships off the Falkland Islands. Only one German light cruiser escaped.

The beginning of November also saw the Royal Navy impose a blockade of Germany's ports. This would have a long-term, and eventually critical, impact on Germany's capacity to continue the war.

The horrors of war were felt in Britain at first hand in November when German warships bombarded Yarmouth. The English east coast was again attacked in December when German warships shelled Scarborough, Whitby and the Hartlepools. Dover was also subjected to attack on Christmas Eve, but on this occasion it was from the air as a German aircraft dropped an aerial bomb on a British target for the first time.

Despite the promises that the war would be over by Christmas, the festive season of 1914 saw deadlock on the Western Front. Yet, regardless of the fighting and the killing, at a number of places the men of both sides left their trenches to meet up with their deadly enemies in No Man's Land during the moving and memorable Christmas Truce.

The war was only suspended for a few soldiers, and only for a few hours, as the killing continued up to the New Year. Indeed it was on Christmas Day that the Royal Naval Air Service mounted its most ambitious effort of the war so far when its seaplanes were towed by tender into the North Sea, from where they took off to attack the airship sheds at the Nordholz Airbase near Cuxhaven.

The first year of the war ended with stalemate on the Western Front and limited gains elsewhere. How long it would all last, no-one could tell. ●

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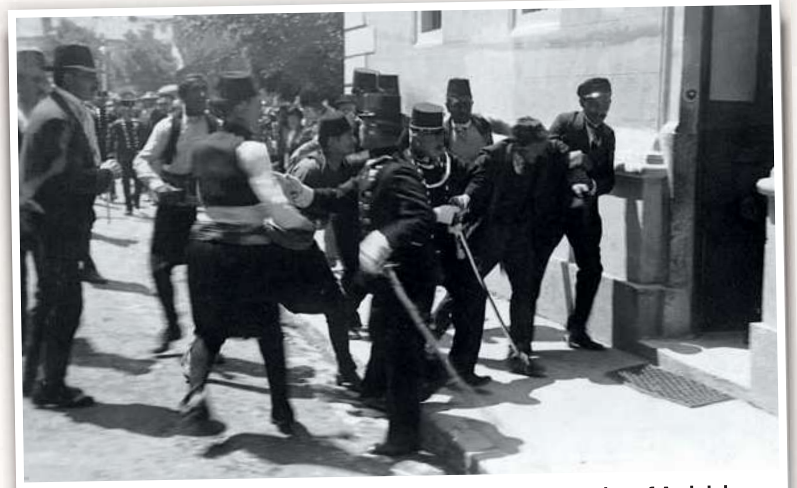
THE ASSASSINATION OF ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND

28 JUNE 1914

ABOVE: **Often referred to as "The Most Deadly Gun in History", this is the FN Model 1910 semi-automatic pistol that Gavrilo Princip used to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, the Duchess of Hohenberg – deaths which ultimately sparked the crisis leading to the First World War.** (HMP)



The arrest of Gavrilo Princip in the aftermath of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. (US Library of Congress)

ARCHDUKE FRANZ Ferdinand was heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne and Inspector General of the Austrian Forces. In this latter capacity the archduke was invited by General Oskar Potiorek, the Governor of the Austrian provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to watch his troops conduct manoeuvres at Sarajevo in June 1914.

At that time Austro-Hungary was the second largest country in Europe after Russia and the third most populous behind Germany. Its empire encompassed a number of countries including part of Serbia as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since the early sixteenth century Serbia had been divided between Austria and the Ottoman Empire, but in 1835 the area occupied by the Turks had achieved independence. In the Balkan Wars fought against the Turks in 1912 and 1913 Serbia had considerably increased its territory and by 1914 sought to recover the territory still under Austrian control. Serbia was supported by Russia, which saw itself as the protector of the Slavic nations.

A covert group, known as The Black Hand, composed of members of the Serbian Army, hatched a plan to force Austria into invading Serbia, thus compelling Russia to intervene. The resulting conflict, it was hoped, would force Austria to relinquish its Serbian territory. Therefore, when The Black Hand learnt that Archduke Ferdinand was going to visit Sarajevo, far from the safety of Vienna, they realised that their chance had come. If they could kill the archduke, Austria would be forced to act against Serbia and the war they hoped for would inevitably ensue.

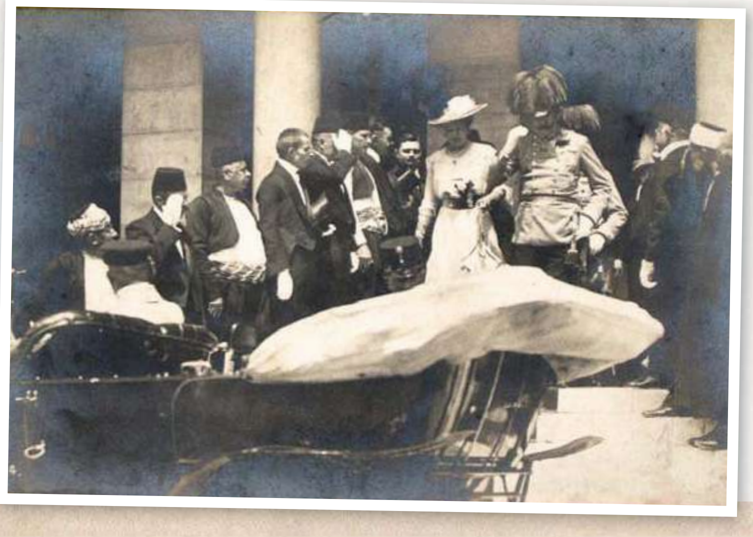
Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, duly arrived at Sarajevo railway station on the morning of Sunday, 28 June 1914. The Black Hand planned to ambush the cavalcade taking Ferdinand from the station, via a scheduled inspection of an army barracks, before moving onto the Town Hall for a reception. There were six cars in the cavalcade and, due to a mix-up, Ferdinand and his wife travelled in the third car which was a sports car with its top folded down.

As the party left the barracks it travelled along the Appel Quay where the assassins were waiting. The first two assassins failed to act but the third one threw a bomb. It bounced off the folded top of the sports car, exploding under the car behind, and wounding twenty people.

The attack had failed but when the royal couple decided to visit those people in hospital who had been wounded in the bomb attack, another of the conspirators, Gavrilo Princip, was able to ambush the car. He fired two shots from a distance of around five feet. One bullet hit Franz Ferdinand in the neck; the other struck Sophie in the abdomen.

Both Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife died of their wounds. Their deaths did spark a crisis, but one far beyond that which The Black Hand had anticipated. Just thirty-seven days later Europe was at war. ●

BELOW: **The blood-stained tunic which Archduke Franz Ferdinand was wearing when he was assassinated in Sarajevo. Along with a number of other items relating to the events of 28 June 1914, this uniform jacket can be seen in the Museum of Military History in Vienna. Other items that can be seen include the plumed cocked hat he was wearing at the time, the Gräf & Stift open tourer he was travelling in, as well as the chaise longue on which he died.** (HMP)



LEFT: **Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, are pictured here getting into a motor car to depart from the City Hall, Sarajevo, on 28 June 1914. As the original caption states, it would only be a matter of minutes before they were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip.** (HMP)

COUNTDOWN TO WAR

1 AUGUST 1914

ABOVE: **Training on a machine-gun underway during a summer camp in 1914.** (WW1IMAGES)

ON 5 July 1914, just one week after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand, the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph wrote to Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, seeking his support for intervention in Serbia. If Germany was to give that undertaking, Austria believed it could deal with Serbia without fear of interference from other countries.

The Kaiser duly agreed to back the Emperor unconditionally and, as a result, Austria sent an ultimatum on 23 July to Belgrade. This included a series of demands that, if agreed to, would effectively end Serbia's independence. Wishing to avoid conflict, Serbia agreed to almost all of Austria's demands, including the desire for "good neighbourly relations" with Austria. Despite this, because not every demand had been accepted by the Serbs, Austria declared war on 28 July and, without delay, began to bombard Belgrade.

Austria and Germany both knew that Russia was bound by agreement with Serbia to protect her in the event of attack. They expected Russia to act in accordance with its agreement but did not believe that Russia was prepared for war. Unprepared or not, Russia could not stand idly by and allow Serbia to be attacked. The Austrian ambassador in St Petersburg was summoned to the Russian Foreign Minister. "This means a European War," the minister declared. "You are setting Europe alight."

The reason for such a dramatic statement by Sergei Sazonov was that Russia was, along with Britain and France, a signatory to the Triple Entente. The terms of the Triple Entente stated that the three nations had a "moral obligation" to support each other in the event of war. This rather vague wording led the Germans and Austrians to believe that France and Britain would not necessarily go to war in support of the Russians.

Russia, however, had already begun to mobilize her forces and she called on France to comply with her moral obligations and join her in opposing the Austrians. The question then arose in the United Kingdom of how it should respond if France was drawn into war. This was put to the Cabinet by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, on 27 July 1914. Five ministers declared that if Britain went to war to support France they would resign immediately.

The other thorny problem was that of Belgium. Ever since the Treaty of London had been signed in 1839, Belgium's neutrality had been guaranteed by the great powers, including of course Britain. If Germany and France did come to blows, Belgium might well find itself in the firing line. Could Great Britain, in all conscience, turn its back on Belgium?

The next step in events took place late on the night of 31 July 1914. Germany told Sazonov that Russia should cease mobilisation or Germany would respond in kind. As Russia showed no inclination to stand its forces down, on 1 August 1914 Germany declared war on Russia. In response France began to mobilise its forces. Everything now depended on how Britain would respond. ●

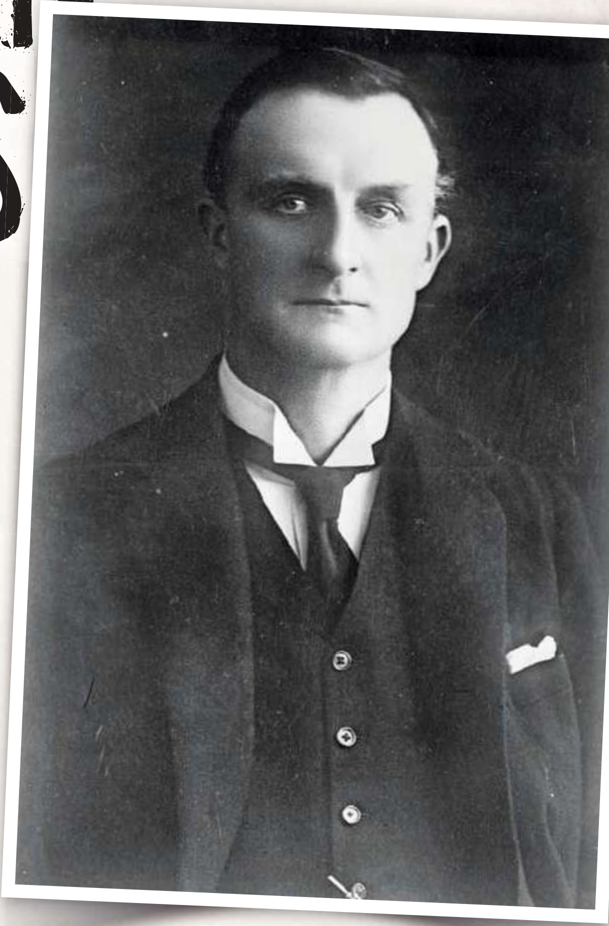
OTHER EVENTS ON 1 AUGUST 1914

- German troops invaded Luxembourg
- Italy declared its neutrality
- British naval reserves were called up

RIGHT and BELOW: **Recruits, in this case from the Honourable Artillery Company, begin their training at Fargo Camp on Salisbury Plain during August 1914. Once Parliament had sanctioned the declaration of war the administrative machinery required to mobilise the reserves and Territorial Army began to move, with the result that many of the men that attended these camps soon found themselves on their way to the front.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S SPEECH

3 AUGUST 1914



RIGHT: Sir Edward Grey pictured in 1914. Grey served as Foreign Secretary from 1905 to 1916, the longest continuous tenure of any person in that office. (BOTH IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

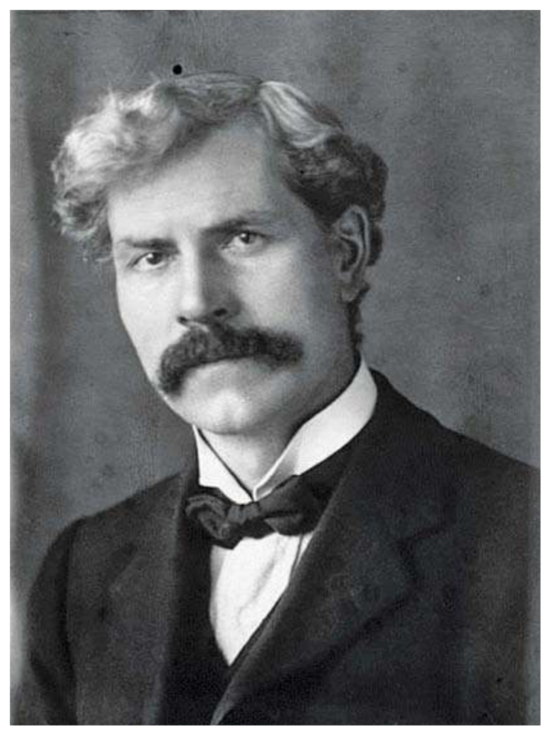
AT THE beginning of August 1914, the world held its collective breath to see how the United Kingdom would respond to the rapidly gathering threat of German aggression. In view of the events unfolding in Europe, the British government decided that it had to act decisively, and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, explained this to the House of Commons:

"Last week I stated that we were working for peace not only for this country, but to preserve the peace of Europe ... It now appears from the news I have received to-day – which has come quite recently, and I am not yet quite sure how far it has reached me in an accurate form – that an ultimatum has been given to Belgium by Germany, the object of which was to offer Belgium friendly relations with Germany on condition that she would facilitate the passage of German troops through Belgium ... We were sounded in the course of last week as to whether if a guarantee were given that, after the war, Belgium integrity would be preserved that would content us. We replied that we could not bargain away whatever interests or obligations we had in Belgian neutrality.

"We have an interest in the independence of Belgium which is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee. It is found in the answer to the question whether under the circumstances of the case, this country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin.

"We are going to suffer, I am afraid, terribly in this war whether we are in it or whether we stand aside. Foreign trade is going to stop, not because the trade routes are closed, but because there is no trade at the other end ... I do not believe for a moment, that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the West of Europe opposite to us – if that had been the result of the war – falling under the domination of a single Power."

Though the House ultimately voted overwhelmingly for war, Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour Party leader, gave this word of warning: "I think he [Grey] is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see." ●



ABOVE: A portrait of Ramsay MacDonald. Because of his anti-war stance, during the early part of the First World War Ramsey was extremely unpopular and even accused by some of treason and cowardice. However, as the fighting dragged on, his popularity increased. During the 1920s, MacDonald became the first ever Labour Party prime minister in the United Kingdom.

OTHER EVENTS ON 3 AUGUST 1914

- Germany declared war on France.
- Belgium refused to allow the passage of German troops through its territory.
- King Albert I of Belgium sent a "supreme appeal" to King George V.
- British government demanded an assurance from Germany that it would respect Belgium's neutrality.
- Mobilization of the Royal Navy completed.
- The Moratorium Bill was passed in Parliament and the Bank Holiday extended to 7 August.

GERMANY ATTACKS

4 AUGUST 1914

German troops pictured in south-west Belgium in August 1914.

German troops on the move in Belgium whilst en route to the front. (ALL IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ON 2 August 1914, German forces occupied Luxembourg without opposition in the first stage of the Schlieffen Plan. As part of this scheme, the German forces in the centre and south would maintain a defensive posture whilst the main bulk of the German Army would be deployed on its right wing. This would then push through Luxembourg and Belgium into northern France, "letting the last man on the right, brush the Channel with his sleeve", as Count Alfred von Schlieffen himself explained.

In response to the invasion of Luxembourg an order went out to all border posts along Belgium's frontiers to open fire on any hostile troops attempting to cross into its territory. That same day, the German Ambassador in Brussels presented the Belgian Foreign Office with a letter. This stated that as it was expected that French troops were about to invade Germany, German forces should be allowed free passage through Belgian territory. The letter was briefly discussed by the Belgian Cabinet – an hour later it was unanimously rejected.

The following day the French commenced hostilities against Germany. General Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, ordered the French VII Corps to advance and capture Mulhouse just inside the German border. The Germans, meanwhile, moved more men into Luxembourg.

It was only on this day that the Belgian GHQ finally decided how to deploy its army. The 1st Division moved from Ghent to Tienen; the 2nd Division went from Antwerp to Leuven; the 3rd Division under General Leman was ordered to *Liège*; the 4th Division, under General Michel was sent to Namur; the 5th from Mons to Perwez, and the 6th moved from Brussels to Wavre.

At dawn on the 4th the advanced units of the German Army crossed into Belgium at six different points, with the objective being the capture of the *Liège* fortresses. *Liège* was ringed by twelve forts, at a rough distance of five miles from the centre, six on each bank of the River Meuse. Each consisted of a massive concrete crown, surrounded by a wide and deep moat. On the far side of the moat was a high earth breastwork. The defensive works were constructed of steel and concrete and for the most part were underground. The forts carried a significant armament: two 210mm howitzers, two 150mm and four 120mm cannon. Each artillery piece was behind a rotating cupola turret. There were also several smaller calibre pieces, as well as numerous machine-guns, beyond the moat and in the spaces between the forts, which were also wired in places.

The Germans planned to knock out the forts and capture *Liège* inside three days. In fact, it was only on the eleventh day of their offensive that the final resistance was overcome. This unexpected delay significantly affected the timetable of the Schlieffen Plan. Already, in the very first days of the war, Germany's chances of victory were slipping away. ●

OTHER EVENTS ON 4 AUGUST 1914

- German Reichstag authorized an extraordinary expenditure of £265m.
- The British Army mobilized; the reserves and territorials were officially called up.
- Australia offered to send 20,000 men.
- Admiral Sir John Jellicoe appointed to supreme command of the Royal Navy's Home fleets.
- The British government took control of the railways.

ABOVE: As the German Army advanced through Belgium, it swept before it a wave of refugees – some of whom are pictured in Paris. By 26 December 1914, a committee chaired by Sir E. Hatch published a report which stated that 1,000,000 refugees had fled from Belgium. Of this number, 110,000 had travelled to the UK, 500,000 or more were in neutral Holland and the rest in France.

BRITAIN DECLARES WAR

4 AUGUST 1914

Times
AUGUST 5, 1914
1D.
BRITAIN
AT
WAR
CHALK FARM
IDRIS
CARPENTIER

SUNDAY, 2 August 1914, was an eventful day across Europe. Germany had declared war on Russia less than twenty-four hours earlier, whilst the French government was frantically rushing troops to its north-western borders. In London, ministers were in almost constant consultation. It was a period during which, noted Sir Edward Grey the Foreign Secretary, "the strain for every member of the cabinet must have been intense".

The following day, French officials informed Russia that their country was prepared to fulfil its obligations under the alliance. During the night or early in the morning German soldiers entered French territory and French airmen flew over German and Belgian soil. A French corporal was killed by a German soldier, and there were other incidents. The German chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, made the most of these events, describing them as "the most serious violation of neutrality imaginable". By the end of the day Germany had declared war on France.

Everything now depended on how Britain would react. Even at this last minute there was still a possibility that Britain would not become involved. The Cabinet, and indeed Parliament, was split. The population was also divided. The *Daily Mirror*, one of the most widely circulated newspapers at the time, adopted a combative stance; "We could not stand aside", declared an editorial. For its part, *The Manchester Guardian* (now *The Guardian*) feared the country was facing "the greatest calamity that anyone living has known".

During the evening of 3 August 1914, Sir Edward Grey received a visitor to his room at the Foreign Office. "It was getting dusk," he later recalled, "and the lamps were being lit in the space below on which we were looking. My friend recalls that I remarked on this with the words: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time.'"

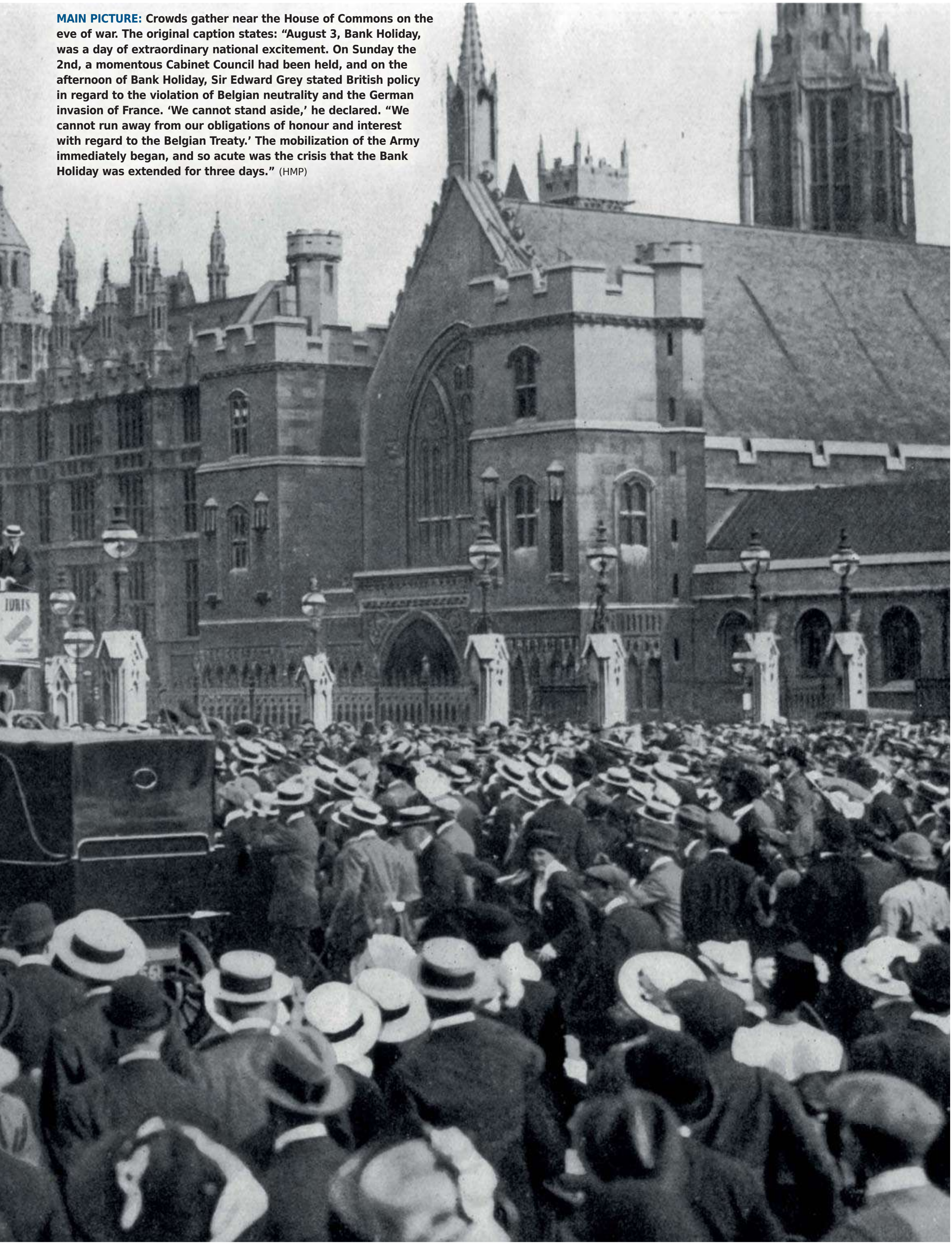
"If the participation of Great Britain in the Great War can be attributed to a single cause," wrote the historian Sir J.A. Hammerton, "that cause was the violation by Germany of Belgian neutrality". Hammerton, however, also pointed out that "Britain was not pledged, as many believed, to go to war in defence of Belgium's neutrality, but the matter concerned her both for sentimental and for practical reasons".

As enemy troops continued to pour into Belgium, last ditch attempts were made by the British government to prevent war, spurred on by a desperate appeal by the King of the Belgians. Finally, on 4 August 1914, an ultimatum was passed to the Germans.

That day, to a packed House of Commons, the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, made the following statement: "We have ... repeated the request we made last week to the German Government, that they should give us the same assurance in regard to Belgian neutrality as was given to us and to Belgium by France last week. We have asked that a reply to that request, and a satisfactory answer to the telegram of this morning – which I have read to the House – should be given before midnight."

Nothing of the sort was received. Indeed, the British ambassador in Berlin, Sir Edward Goschen, later wrote the following of the German response: "Herr von Jagow [the German Foreign Minister] replied that to his great regret he could give no other answer than that he had given me earlier in the day, namely that the safety of the [German] Empire rendered it absolutely necessary that the Imperial troops should advance through Belgium."

When the deadline passed, the British Foreign Office issued this statement: "Owing to the summary rejection by the German Government of the request made by His Majesty's Government for assurances that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected, His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin has received his passport, and His Majesty's Government has declared to the German Government that a state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany as from 11pm on August 4th." ●



MAIN PICTURE: **Crowds gather near the House of Commons on the eve of war. The original caption states: "August 3, Bank Holiday, was a day of extraordinary national excitement. On Sunday the 2nd, a momentous Cabinet Council had been held, and on the afternoon of Bank Holiday, Sir Edward Grey stated British policy in regard to the violation of Belgian neutrality and the German invasion of France. 'We cannot stand aside,' he declared. "We cannot run away from our obligations of honour and interest with regard to the Belgian Treaty.' The mobilization of the Army immediately began, and so acute was the crisis that the Bank Holiday was extended for three days."** (HMP)

THE ARMY MOBILIZES

4 AUGUST 1914

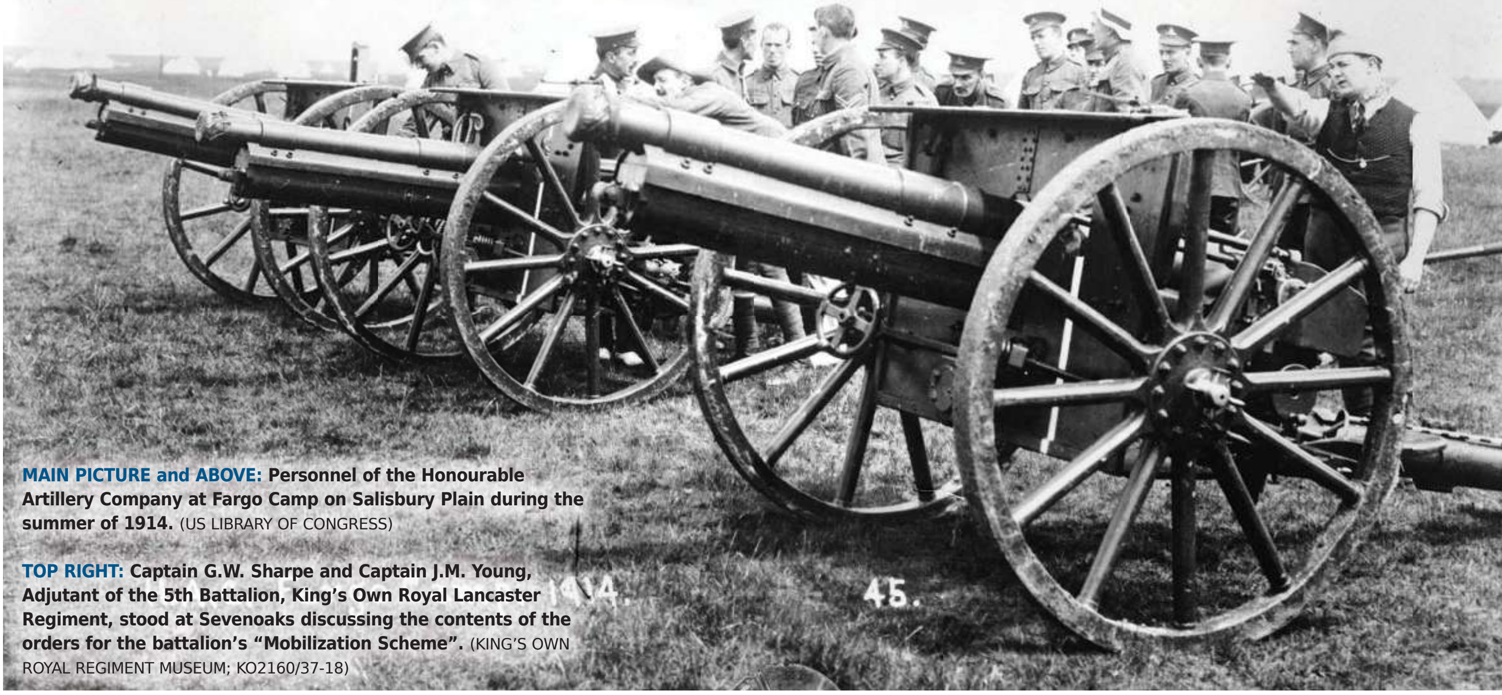
H.A.C. Fargo Camp 1914
54

BY THE evening of Tuesday, 4 August 1914, seven European nations were at war. Germany and Austria, known as the Central Powers, formed one group. The others, the Allies, consisted of Great Britain, France, Russia, Belgium, and Serbia. Of the combatants Great Britain alone had no form of compulsory military service.

At the outbreak of war, Britain's military forces were divided into two main branches, the regular army with its reserves (which included the British Expeditionary Force), and the Territorial Force. In 1914 the strength of the regular army in Great Britain and its colonies was 156,110 officers and men, 12,000 short of the establishment or nominal strength. There were, in addition, 78,400 British troops serving in India, making with miscellaneous units something over 250,000 men. The regular reserve, all trained men, numbered 146,000 and the special reserve, consisting of partially trained men, numbered 63,000.

From this host of men, however, important deductions had to be made. About 30,000 of the regular army were under 20 years of age and unfit for foreign service. Another 10,000 men were in hospital or incapable of taking the field. At the same time, all the units, regiments, squadrons, and batteries required further complements of reservists to bring them up to war strength; these reservists, joining from civil life, needed some days or weeks of training before they could support the trials and privations which fall upon the soldier in time of war.

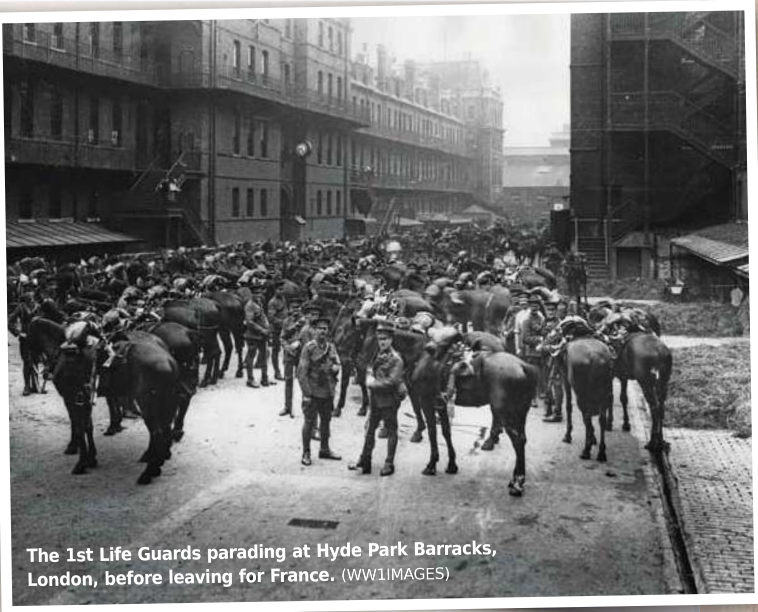
Behind the regular army was the Territorial Force, which had replaced the volunteers of the Victorian age. The force had a nominal



MAIN PICTURE and ABOVE: Personnel of the Honourable Artillery Company at Fargo Camp on Salisbury Plain during the summer of 1914. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

TOP RIGHT: Captain G.W. Sharpe and Captain J.M. Young, Adjutant of the 5th Battalion, King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, stood at Sevenoaks discussing the contents of the orders for the battalion's "Mobilization Scheme". (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM; KO2160/37-18)

Men of the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards pictured about to leave Wellington Barracks, to join the British Expeditionary Force, on 6 August 1914. (WW1IMAGES)



The 1st Life Guards parading at Hyde Park Barracks, London, before leaving for France. (WW1IMAGES)

strength of 313,000 officers and men. It was organized in brigades and divisions which were composed of all arms, i.e. of infantry, cavalry or yeomanry, artillery, and engineers – a big benefit from the military standpoint. But the force lacked training, the volunteers spending little more than fifteen days in camp each year.

On the eve of war the Territorial Force was about 63,000 men short of its proper strength, that is to say, it numbered about 250,000 men. Of those in the ranks nearly 17,000 were under eighteen years of age and therefore unable to be sent overseas.

On the morning of 4 August, the Prime Minster, Herbert Asquith, stood up in the House of Commons and stated that he had received a message from King George V, a message that the Speaker read out:

"The present state of public affairs in Europe constituting in the opinion of His Majesty a case of great emergency within the meaning of the Acts of Parliament in that behalf, His Majesty deems it proper to provide additional means for the Military Service, and therefore, in pursuance of these Acts, His Majesty has thought it right to communicate to the House of Commons that His Majesty is, by proclamation, about to order that the Army Reserve shall be called out on permanent service, that soldiers who would otherwise, be entitled, in pursuance of the terms of their enlistment, to be transferred to the Reserve, shall continue in Army Service for such a period, not exceeding the period for which they might be required to serve if they were transferred to the Reserve and called out for permanent service, as to His Majesty may seem expedient, and that such directions as may seem necessary may be given for embodying the Territorial Force and for making such special arrangements as may be proper with regard to units or individuals whose services may be required in other than a military capacity."

The proclamation for calling out the army reserve and embodying the Territorial Force was made shortly after by the King at Buckingham Palace on 4 August 1914. Once Parliament had sanctioned the declaration of war, the administrative machinery required to mobilise the army began to move.

An example of how a regular infantry battalion mobilised for war is provided by the 2nd Battalion, the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Quartered at Albuhera Barracks, Aldershot, the battalion received its order for mobilization at 18.00 hours on 4 August.

The following day the battalion's strength was already 508 men and ten horses – a further 599 men and forty-eight horses were required to bring it up to strength. By the second day of mobilization, another 134 men had reported for duty.

On 7 August, a total of 549 reservists had arrived, meaning that only two officers, twenty-six men, and sixteen horses were outstanding. Three days later the battalion, complete with transport, undertook a route march. On the 12th it received orders to entrain, on the 13th, for its port of embarkation and proceed with the British Expeditionary Force to France.

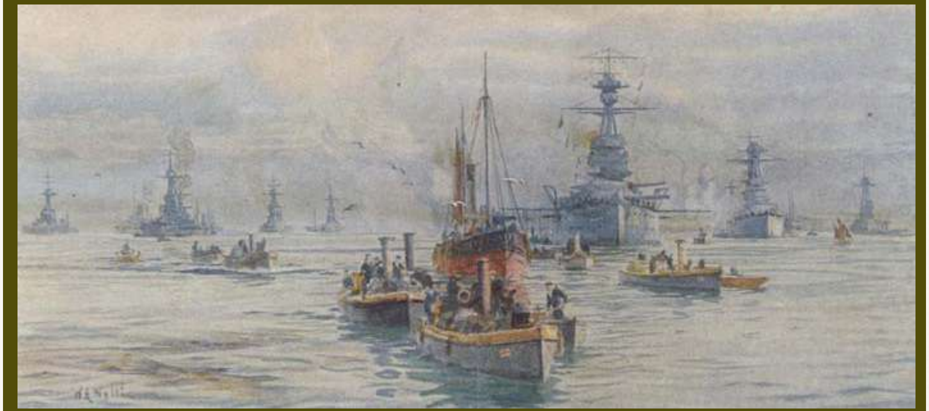
The same day, His Majesty the King, accompanied by the Queen, inspected the regiment to bid it farewell. Like so many units, the 2nd Battalion, the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry was on its way to war. ●

THE ROYAL NAVY WAS READY

SIX MONTHS before war had become even a possibility, the Admiralty had decided that every available Royal Navy warship in home waters should be placed on a war footing during the summer of 1914.

On 17 March 1914, Winston Churchill, as the First Lord of the Admiralty, announced that every ship in the Home Fleet would be placed on a war footing between 15 July and 25 July, and that "the whole of the Royal Fleet Reserve", some 30,000 strong, would be called out for eleven days. The result was that when it became increasingly likely that war could not be avoided, the British Fleet was in a state of readiness for war such as it could not possibly have enjoyed for more than four weeks out of any average year.

On 29 July 1914, six days before war was declared, a force of 150 Royal Navy battleships, cruisers and destroyers, accompanied by large numbers of support and ancillary vessels, steamed out of their ports to take up positions in readiness for the order to commence operations against Germany.



A contemporary painting depicting Royal Navy warships in Scapa Flow being tended by picket boats and trawlers in the summer of 1914. (HMP)

FIRST VESSEL TO BE SUNK IN THE WAR

5 AUGUST 1914

AT THE moment that Britain declared war on Germany the destroyers HMS *Lance* and HMS *Landrail*, as part of the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla based at Harwich, were on patrol in the North Sea. These *Laforey*-class destroyers were amongst the newest ships in the Royal Navy. Capable of a maximum speed of twenty-nine knots, they were each armed with three Quick Firing (QF) 4-inch Mk.IV guns, one QF 2-pounder Mk.II, and two, twin 21-inch torpedo tubes.

Expecting trouble from the Germans, the Royal Navy was out in the North Sea in considerable force. The 3rd Destroyer Flotilla was part of what was termed the Southern Force, the rest of which put to sea at dawn on 5 August to join *Lance* and *Landrail* in patrolling the lower North Sea.

As well as Commodore Tyrwhitt's 1st and 3rd Destroyer Flotillas of the Harwich Force, the Southern Force also included the cruisers HMS *Cressy*, HMS *Aboukir*, HMS *Hogue*, HMS *Bacchante* and HMS *Euryalus* of Rear-Admiral Campbell's 7th Cruiser Squadron and a number of submarines under Commodore Keyes.

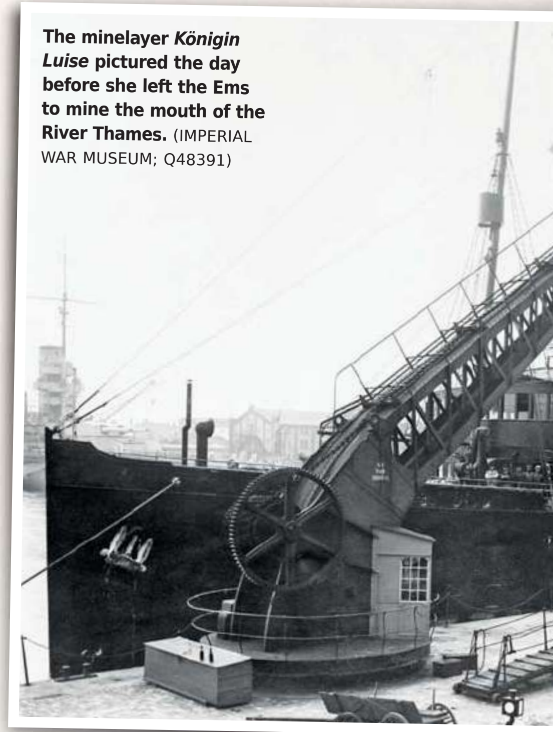
Tyrwhitt led the way in his flagship, the cruiser HMS *Amethyst*, along with two submarines, towards the Heligoland Bight. At the same time, the 1st Destroyer Flotilla swept up the Dutch coast followed by the 3rd Flotilla under the command of Captain C.H. Fox in the scout cruiser HMS *Amphion*.

Captain Fox had not gone far before he encountered the first sign of enemy activity. A lone trawler informed him that a suspicious vessel was "throwing things overboard twenty miles north-east of the Outer Gabbard".

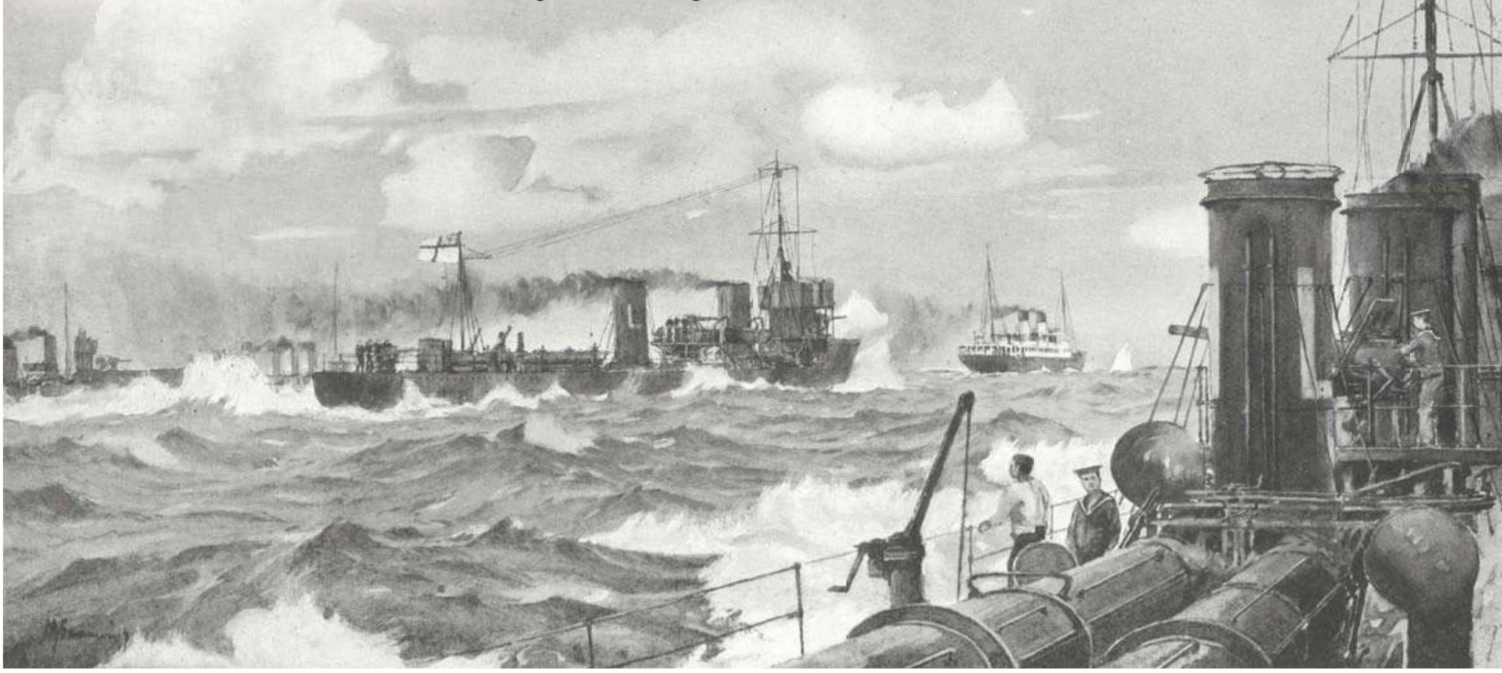
The Outer Gabbard is slightly to the north of Felixstowe. While the flotilla spread out in search, *Lance* and *Landrail* were sent directly to the point identified by the trawler.

Steaming on at full speed, the destroyers soon sighted what appeared to be a Great Eastern Railway steamer making towards the Dutch coast. It was 10.25 hours on the morning of 5 August 1914.

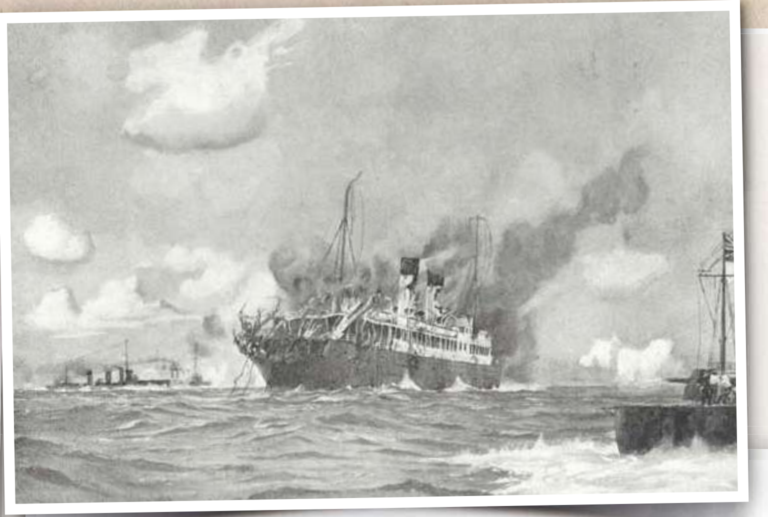
"As they rushed forward," stated one contemporary account, "the steamer began to put on speed, and she was soon running for all she was worth. A warning shot was fired,



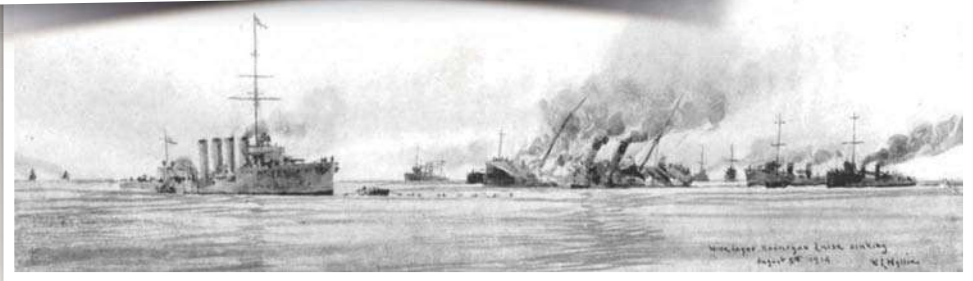
The minelayer *Königin Luise* pictured the day before she left the Ems to mine the mouth of the River Thames. (IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM; Q48391)



MAIN PICTURE: **A drawing depicting the destroyers HMS *Lance* and HMS *Landrail* during their pursuit of the minelayer *Königin Luise* on 5 August 1914.** (HMP)



LEFT: Shells from the British warships slam into the stricken *Königin Luise*. (HMP)



BELOW: The victorious Royal Navy destroyers, along with the Active-class scout cruiser HSM *Amphion*, rescue survivors from the sinking *Königin Luise*. (HMP)

summoning her to stop. But as she failed to do so, the destroyers opened fire.

"The first shot crashed into [the steamer's] bridge and others wrecked the upper works, but she made only a feeble effort to reply. A few minutes after the first round was fired a shell from the *Lance* tore away her stern, and at twelve o'clock ... she went to the bottom of the sea."

It was soon established that the destroyers had attacked the German minelayer SMS *Königin Luise*, a former steam ferry that had converted to a minelayer. She had sailed from Emden the previous day with orders to lay mines off the Thames Estuary.

Though *Königin Luise* could carry 200 mines, she was no match for the two destroyers and as soon as she spotted them approaching she turned and ran, moving into a rain squall where she proceeded to lay more mines. It was HMS *Lance* which opened fire on the fleeing minelayer with her forward 4-inch gun. It was the first shot of the war at sea.

As *Königin Luise* tried to escape into neutral waters to the south-east, by steaming through the minefield she had just laid, *Lance* and *Landrail* had continued to pursue, being joined by *Amphion*. By noon the minelayer, damaged by the shell fire from the British warships, had been scuttled by its crew.

The sinking of the minelayer was recounted by one un-identified sailor in a letter published in the *Liverpool Echo* on 3 September 1914: "I don't know if you read about the sinking of the mine-layer *Konigin Luise*. I noticed that our ship's name was not mentioned, although the foremost gun's crew of ours got in the first shot. I am sight-setter at the foremost gun.

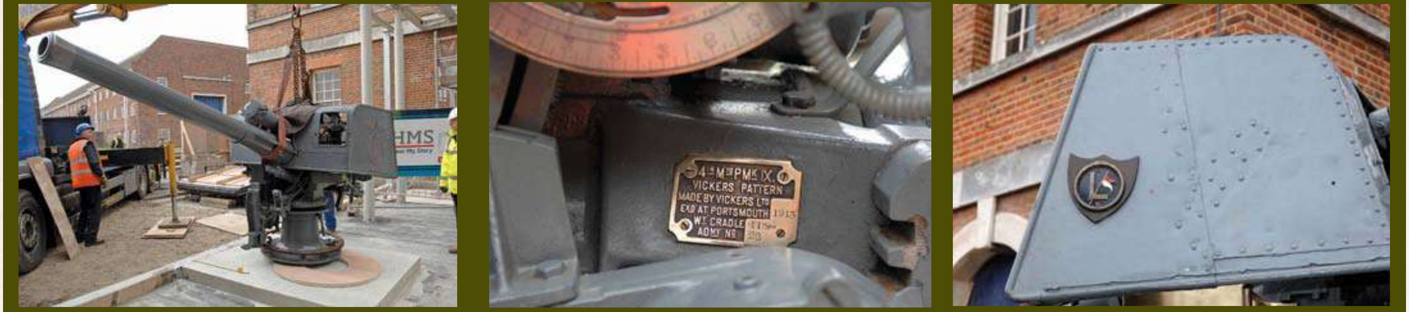
"We chased her for two hours, and fired on her for thirty-five minutes, and as she was sinking the remainder of our flotilla came up and finished her off.

"Her captain must have been a brave man, for although he was firing at us he could not hit us, as his guns were not as big as ours, and therefore the shells would not carry as far.

"As she sank we picked up the captain and a warrant officer who were floating in the water with lifebelts on. They were in a terrible condition. The captain died while we were taking him to the hospital at Harwich, and we buried him at sea. The other officer lived all right, although he was gashed a lot."

Though the Royal Navy had drawn first blood, within a few hours the Imperial German Navy would get its revenge – and the victor was none other than *Königin Luise*. ●

THE GUN WHICH FIRED THE FIRST SHOT OF THE WAR AT SEA



The 4-inch gun which fired the first shot from HMS *Lance* during the action against *Königin Luise* is on display at the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. It sits at the entrance to the 'HMS – Hear My Story' exhibition which tells the stories of the men, women and ships of the Royal Navy over the past 100 years.

On loan from the Imperial War Museum, the QF 4-inch Mk.IV gun and pedestal mount is pictured here arriving at the National Museum of the Royal Navy in 2013. The gun was semi-automatic, with the recoil opening the breech and ejecting the cartridge. Insertion of a new cartridge closed the breech and the gun was then ready to fire again. Thus a rate of fire of between fifteen and twenty rounds per minute could be obtained by a trained crew. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY)

THE BEF ARRIVES IN FRANCE

6 AUGUST 1914

IT WAS the reforms of the British Army undertaken by Lord Haldane, during his tenure as the Secretary of State for War between 1905 and 1902, which led to the creation of a permanently established British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

Under Haldane's plans, this force of 160,000 was constituted for deployment abroad in case of need. It consisted of six divisions of infantry, each composed of 598 officers and 18,077 men, with fifty-four field guns, eighteen 4.5 inch howitzers, and four heavy 60-pounder guns, along with one division of cavalry, the latter in turn composed of 485 officers and 9,412 men with twenty-four horse artillery guns. In addition, troops were provided for the lines of communication.

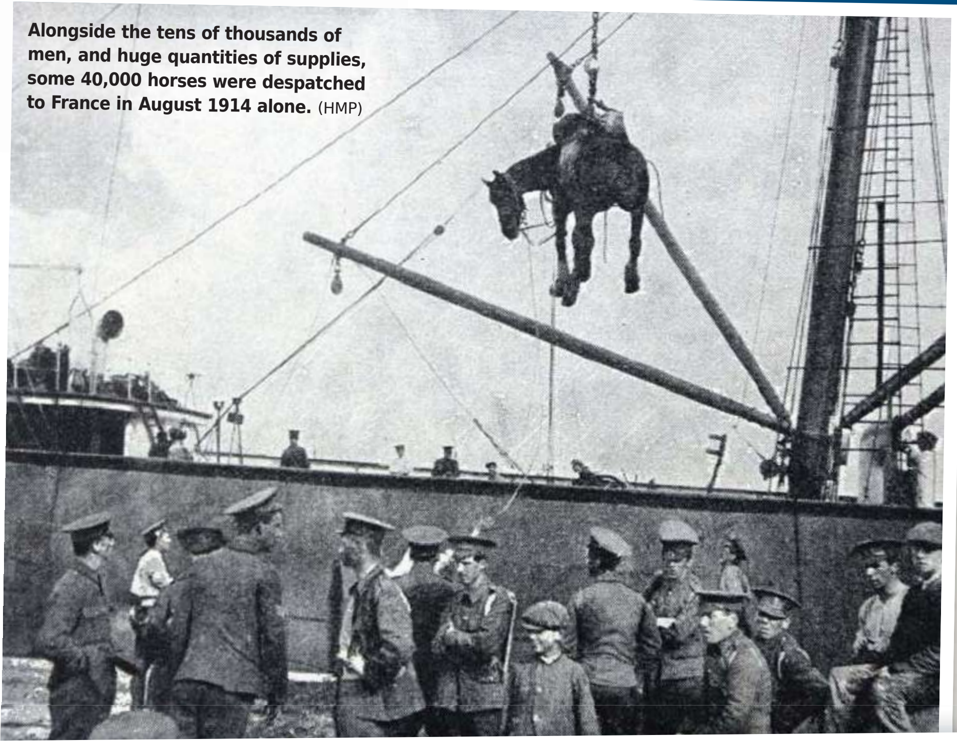
Such was the rapid sequence of events which immediately followed the declaration of war that the embarkation of the BEF began, under conditions of the greatest secrecy, on 6 August 1914. Between the 12th and 17th August, British troops continued to pour across the Channel to disembark on French soil, the principal ports used for the purpose being Folkestone, Southampton in the UK, and Le Havre and Boulogne. "All was ready for their reception," noted the Official History, "and the welcome given to them by the inhabitants was enthusiastic".

To receive the main body of the BEF, five camps were established on the hills around Boulogne. There was the Marlborough Camp on the road to Calais, St Martin's Camp, in two sections, on the road to Saint-Omer, and the two parts of St Leonard Camp which was established on the road to Pont de Briques.

On 12 August, Field-Marshal Sir John French, the BEF's Commander-in-Chief, retaining only a small party of his immediate staff with him, despatched

ABOVE: **Elements of the British Expeditionary Force head across the Channel to France.** (HMP)

BELOW: **Scottish troops, possibly of the 2nd Battalion the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, pictured soon after their arrival in Boulogne on 14 August 1914. In the background is the Grand Hotel du Louvre et Terminus.** (WW1IMAGES)



Alongside the tens of thousands of men, and huge quantities of supplies, some 40,000 horses were despatched to France in August 1914 alone. (HMP)

his General Headquarters from London to Southampton. Its staff crossed to Le Havre on the 14th, and proceeded by rail early on the 16th, reaching Le Cateau late that night.

Sir John French himself left London on 14 August. He arrived at Amiens soon after 21.00 hours that day.

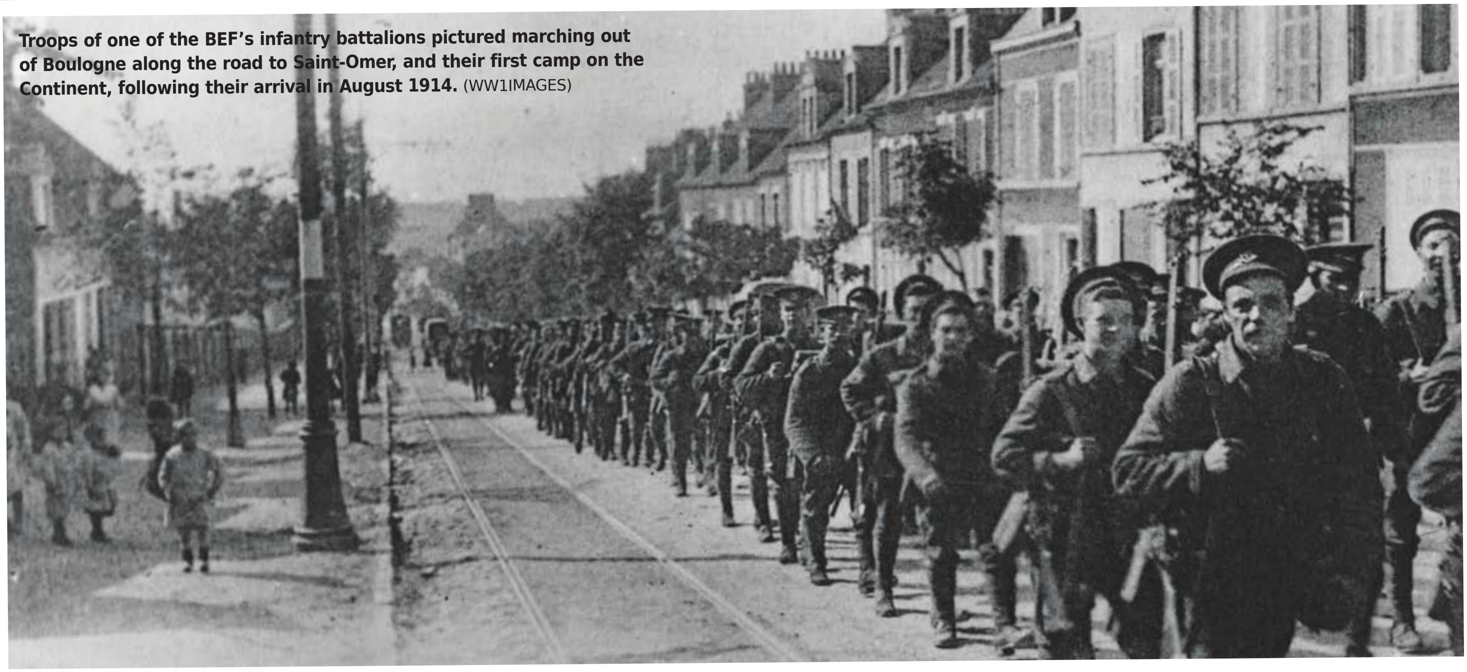
The majority of the BEF, with a combatant strength of about 80,000 men – four infantry divisions and one cavalry division – was on the Continent by the evening of 16 August. The two remaining divisions did not reach the front till the middle of September.

In his first despatch of the war, which was dated 7 September 1914, French wrote: “The transport of the troops from England both by sea and by rail was effected in the best order and without a check. Each unit arrived at its destination in this country [France] well within the scheduled time.

“The concentration was practically complete on the evening of Friday, the 21st ...”, continued French, “and I was able to make dispositions to move the Force during Saturday, the 22nd, to positions I considered most favourable from which to commence operations.”

The actual British expeditionary force that reached France during August 1914 had a combatant strength of about 80,000 men – four infantry divisions and one cavalry division. The other two divisions did not reach the front till the middle of September.

When the disembarkation was complete, Lord Kitchener published the following communiqué: “The Expeditionary Force as detailed for foreign service has been safely landed on French soil. The embarkation, transportation, and disembarkation of men and stores were alike carried through with the greatest precision and without a single casualty.”



Troops of one of the BEF’s infantry battalions pictured marching out of Boulogne along the road to Saint-Omer, and their first camp on the Continent, following their arrival in August 1914. (WW1IMAGES)

ABOVE: A part of the British Expeditionary Force pictured arriving in France following the start of the First World War. This pictures shows the men of 11th (Prince Albert’s Own) Hussars on board a ship arriving at Le Havre, 16 August 1914. (HMP)

6 AUGUST 1914

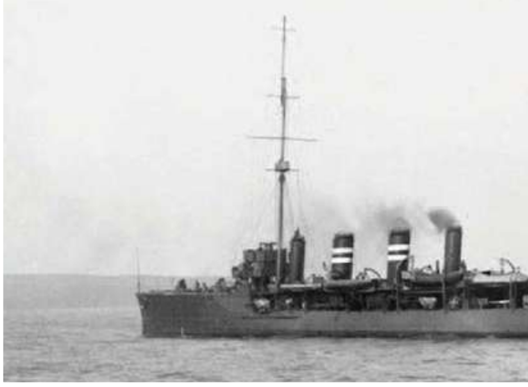
THE LOSS OF HMS AMPHION

HAVING PARTICIPATED in the sinking of *Königin Luise*, and the rescue of survivors from the minelayer's crew, HMS *Amphion* and her attendant destroyers resumed their patrol in the North Sea.

In the early morning of 6 August 1914, after making a detour to avoid known mines, *Amphion* approached the spot where the German minelayer had first been spotted the day before. At about 06.30 hours, with most of the crew at breakfast, the cruiser struck a mine which had been laid by *Königin Luise*. The explosion, just beside the forebridge, broke the cruiser's back. Many of those who were at breakfast were killed or suffocated in the forward messdecks.

Under the title "Official Account", the following description of the events that fateful morning was published in the *Lichfield Mercury* on Friday, 21 August 1914:

"A sheet of flame instantly enveloped the bridge, which rendered the captain [Captain Cecil H. Fox] insensible and he fell on to the fore and aft bridge. As soon as he recovered consciousness he ran to the engine room to stop the engines, which were still going at revolutions for twenty knots. As all the fore part was on fire it was impossible to reach the bridge or to flood the fore magazine. The ship's back appeared to be broken, and she was already settling down by the bows. All efforts were therefore directed towards placing the wounded in a place of safety in case of explosion and towards getting her in tow by the stern."



With all attempts to extinguish the raging fires in the forward part of the ship having failed, "Abandon Ship" was ordered. By this time the escorting destroyers had closed in to render such assistance as was .

"The men fell in for this purpose with the same composure that had marked their behaviour throughout," continued the account in the *Lichfield Mercury*. "All was done without hurry or confusion, and twenty minutes after the mine was struck the men, officers and captain left the ship.

THE VICTIMS ARE BURIED

THE FIRST funeral service for those who died ashore following the sinking of *Königin Luise* and HMS *Amphion* was held on Saturday, 8 August 1914. The following account of the ceremony in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Shotley, Suffolk, appeared in the *Dundee Courier* the following Monday:

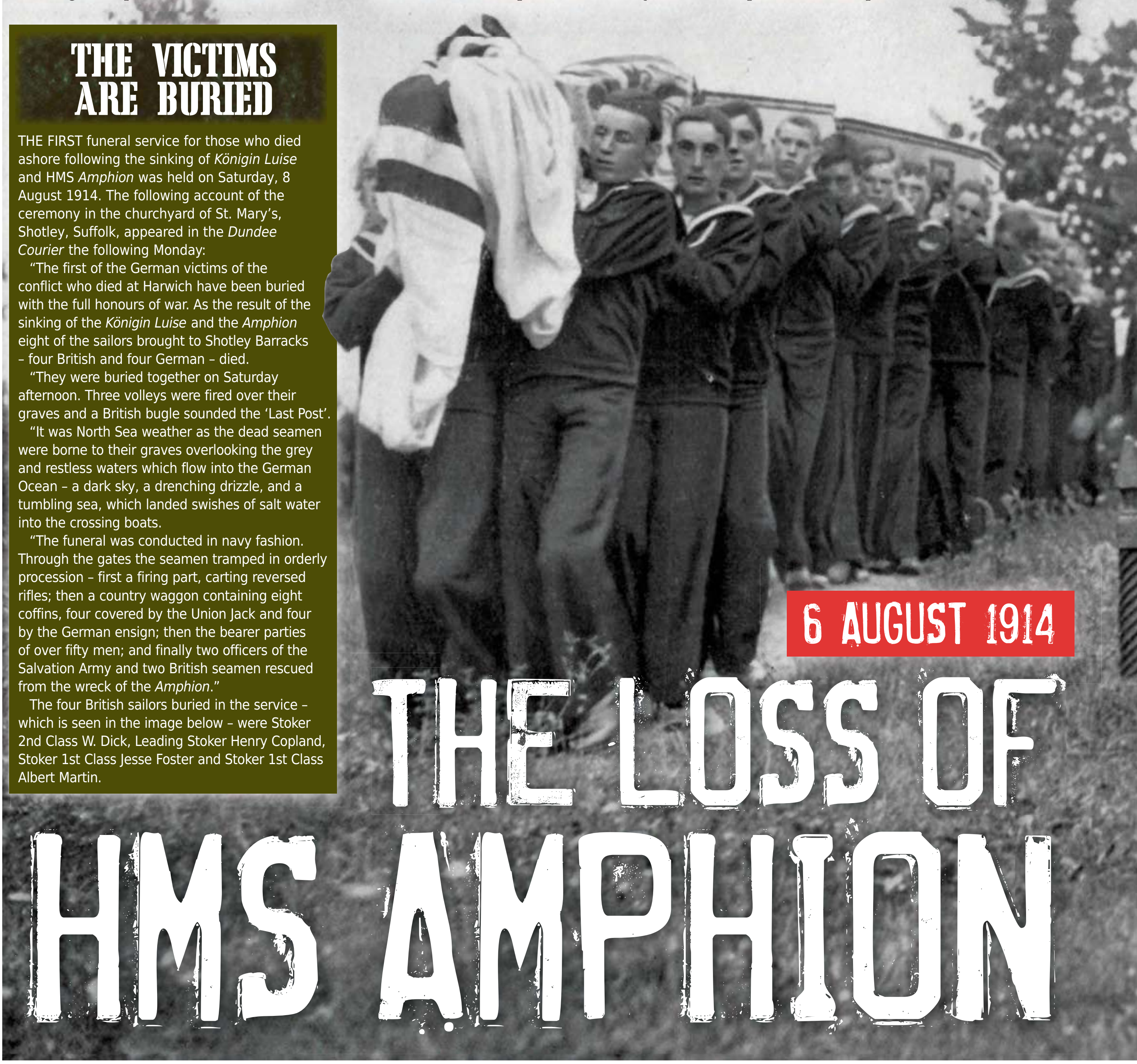
"The first of the German victims of the conflict who died at Harwich have been buried with the full honours of war. As the result of the sinking of the *Königin Luise* and the *Amphion* eight of the sailors brought to Shotley Barracks – four British and four German – died.

"They were buried together on Saturday afternoon. Three volleys were fired over their graves and a British bugle sounded the 'Last Post'.

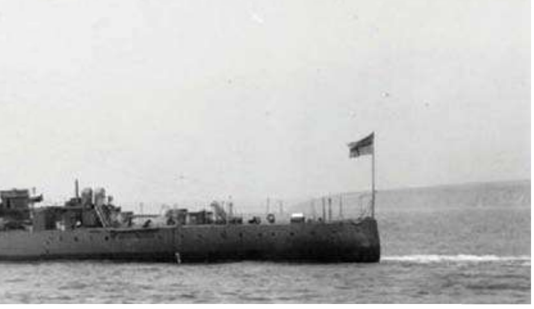
"It was North Sea weather as the dead seamen were borne to their graves overlooking the grey and restless waters which flow into the German Ocean – a dark sky, a drenching drizzle, and a tumbling sea, which landed swishes of salt water into the crossing boats.

"The funeral was conducted in navy fashion. Through the gates the seamen tramped in orderly procession – first a firing part, carting reversed rifles; then a country waggon containing eight coffins, four covered by the Union Jack and four by the German ensign; then the bearer parties of over fifty men; and finally two officers of the Salvation Army and two British seamen rescued from the wreck of the *Amphion*."

The four British sailors buried in the service – which is seen in the image below – were Stoker 2nd Class W. Dick, Leading Stoker Henry Copland, Stoker 1st Class Jesse Foster and Stoker 1st Class Albert Martin.



The Active-class scout cruiser HMS *Amphion*, the Royal Navy's first casualty on 6 August 1914. (IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM; Q43259)



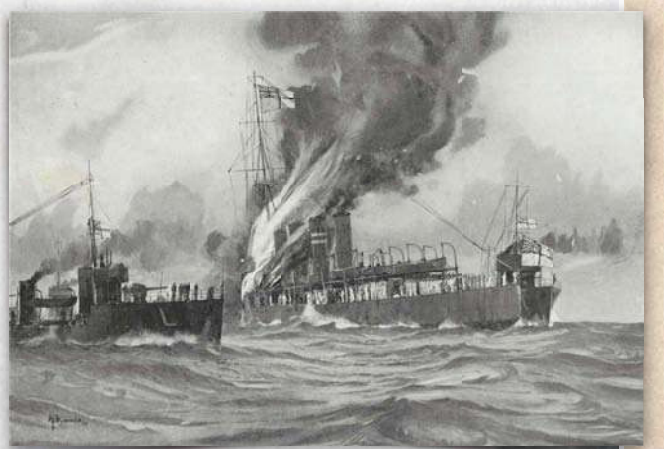
"Three minutes after the captain left his ship another explosion occurred, which enveloped and blew up the whole fore part of the vessel. The effects showed that she must have struck a second mine, which exploded the fore magazine. Debris falling from a great height struck the rescue boats and destroyers, and one of the *Amphion*'s shells burst on the deck of one of the latter, killing two of the men and a German prisoner rescued from the cruiser.

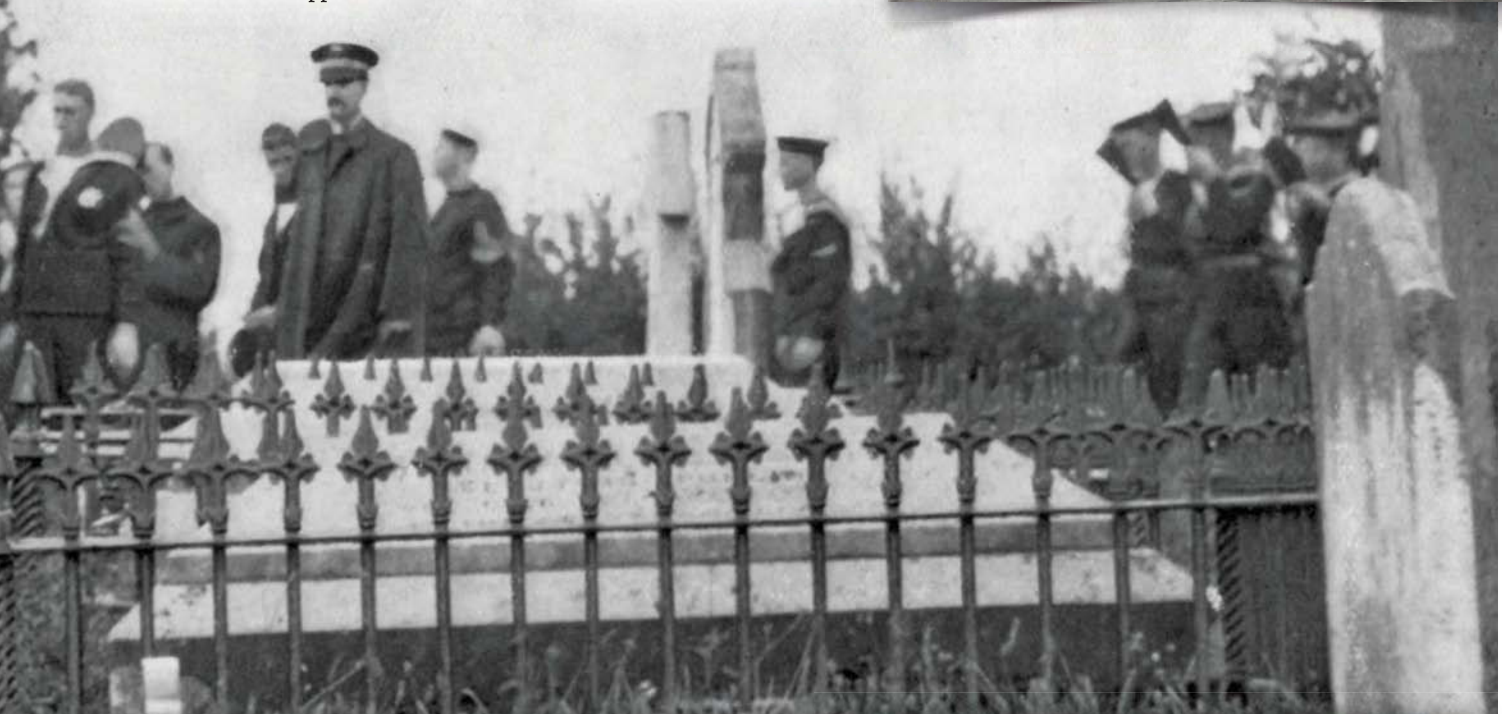
"The after part now began to settle down quickly till its foremost part was on the bottom, and the whole after part titled up an angle of 45 degrees. In another quarter of an hour this, too, had disappeared."

Of *Amphion*'s crew, 131 officers and men were lost, besides many of the German seamen rescued from *Königin Luise*. Among the survivors was Midshipman E.F. Fegan who would later be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross as captain of the Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS *Jervis Bay* when it was sunk in the Second World War. Many of the survivors, being cared for in a military hospital in Harwich, were badly wounded, as another newspaper reporter noted on 14 August 1914:

"The *Amphion*'s men were dreadfully burned and scalded. They have marks on their faces and bodies which resemble the splashes of an acid. The scene here is like that which follows a colliery explosion. Of the British seamen in hospital, 13 are suffering from severe burns, five from less serious burns, two from the effects of lyddite [explosive] fumes, and one each from concussion, severe injury, slight wounds, shock, and slight burns. A few wounded German sailors [captured crewmen from *Königin Luise*] lie in the hospital."

With the conflict barely thirty-two hours old, HMS *Amphion* gained the unwelcome distinction of being the first Royal Navy warship to be lost in the war. ●





MAIN PICTURE: The funeral service of eight of the victims of the sinking of HMS *Amphion* – four British and four German – underway in Shotley on 8 August 1914. (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: An artist's depiction of the stricken HMS *Amphion* in the moments after the first explosion. (HMP)

RIGHT: Some of the war graves in St Mary's, Shotley, today. There are 201 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war, eight of whom are unidentified, and there are thirty-four of the Second World War. (COURTESY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION)

THE LOSS OF THE CITY OF WINCHESTER

6 AUGUST 1914

IN APRIL 1914, the German light cruiser SMS Königsberg, under the command of Fregattenkapitän Max Looff, sailed from her home port to begin what should have been a two-year deployment to German East Africa, writes Kevin Patience.

After a few weeks of showing the flag in the region, the warship was ordered to sea at the end of July. The cruiser was off the Somali coast when war was declared on 4 August. Now operating as a surface raider, on the evening of 6 August *Königsberg* intercepted the British cargo ship SS *City of Winchester*, under the command of Captain George Boyck, east of Aden. *Winchester* was a new

AN INTERESTING STORY

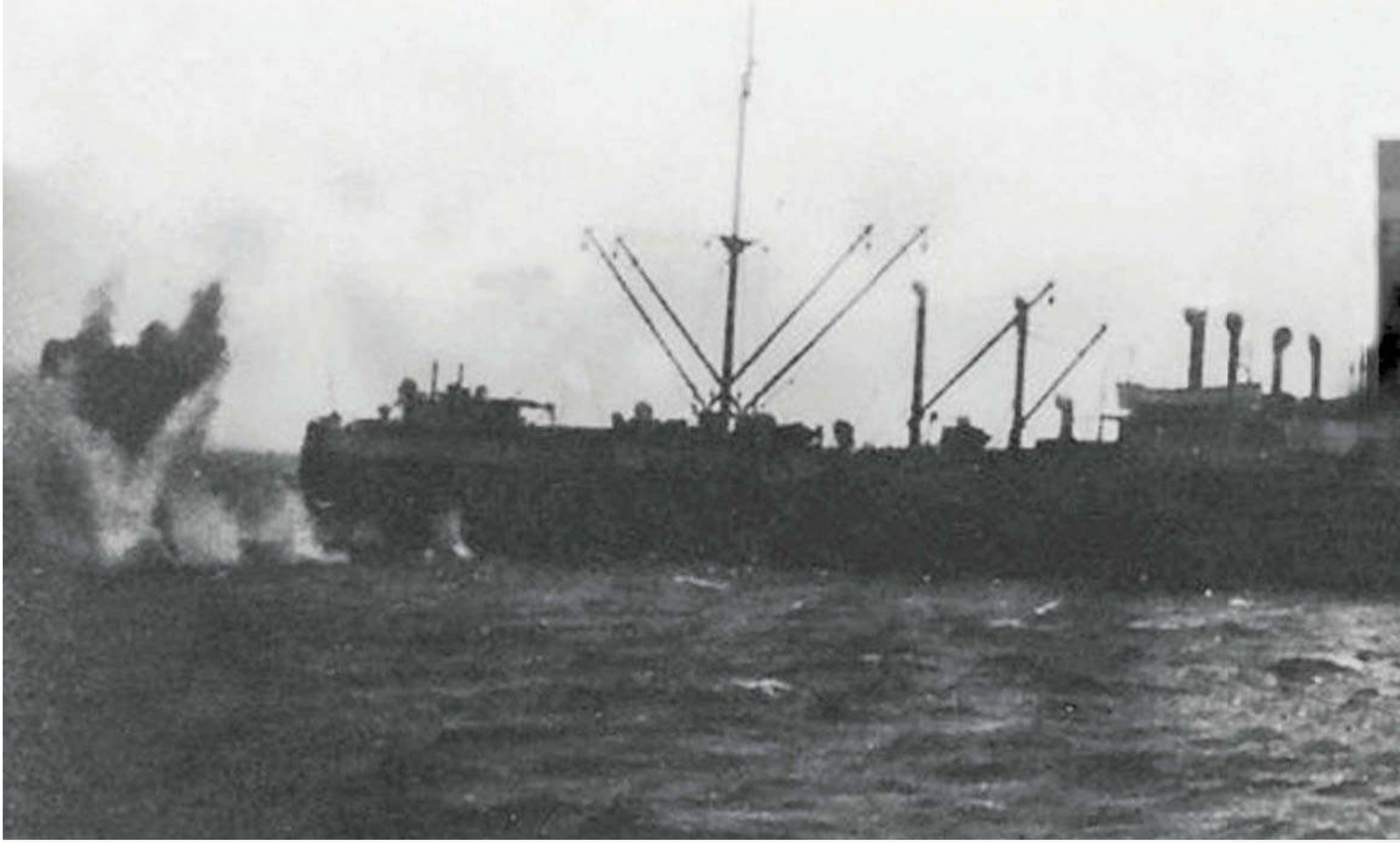
"AN INTERESTING story was told to a Press representative by Walter Dickinson, who was an apprentice on the *City of Winchester*, which was captured by the German cruiser *Königsberg*, who has just returned home to Scarborough. Mr Brown, of Withernsea, was the second officer, and Mr Thompson, of Grimsby, the third engineer of the *City of Winchester*. He says that the crew were well treated by the Germans, nearly all of whom could speak English. A sub-lieutenant went on board, and in his delight at the capture of the *City of Winchester* he chuckled and exclaimed in broken English, 'What a jok' (what a joke).

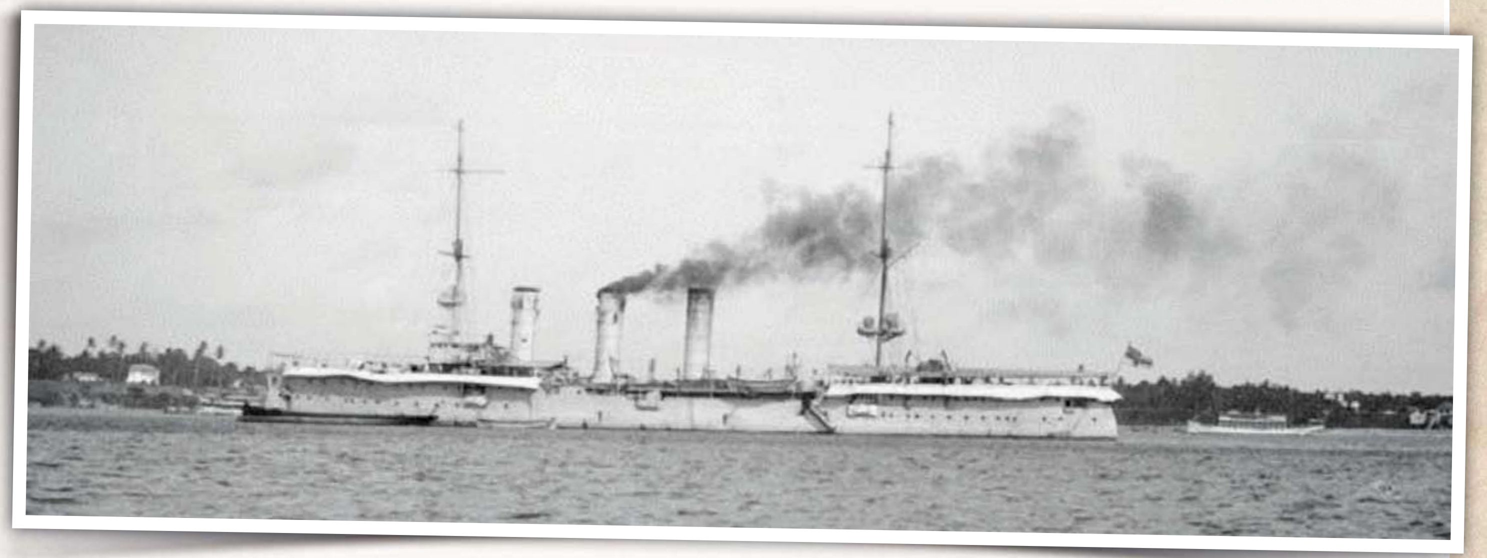
"As soon as the Germans went on board the vessel they went to the Marconi room and broke the wireless, putting an armed guard outside the iron door. Armed guards were also put at the doors of other rooms … The Germans ultimately left on board the *City of Winchester* Mr Brown, Mr Thompson and the carpenter, a naturalised Britisher (of German nationality), together with 50 Lascars, part of the crew. When the other members of the crew left the vessel to go on board a German ship, the *Zeiten*, it was said that the ship would be sunk within three days. Later young Dickinson and the others heard of two lifeboats being picked up, and that the officers had been transferred to another steamer …

"Forty German Reservists from the *Zeiten* were placed aboard the *City of Winchester* as a prize crew. The two vessels sailed for four or five days until they ran into a bay up the Arabian coast in a group called the Kyora-Morya islands. It was here that the coal, water and foodstuffs and the crew and passengers of the *City of Winchester* were ordered to the *Zeiten*. During the operations the *Königsberg* came upon the scene, but she only stopped some minutes. During this time the *Zeiten* was disguised as much as possible in order to escape detection by British vessels. The yellow funnel was painted black, and later, to resemble a British India boat – with two white bands and a black band in the centre. The two vessels then parted company, the *City of Winchester* being left with the second officer, the second engineer, carpenter, and 50 Lascars and prize crew."

Hull Daily Mail, Tuesday, 13 October 1914.

BELOW: **Shells from SMS *Königsberg* explode beside SS *City of Winchester* on 12 August 1914.** (COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)





ABOVE: **SMS *Königsberg* at Bagamoyo, Tanzania, in June 1914, shortly before the outbreak of war.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 105-DOA3001/WALTHER DOBBERTIN/CC-BY-SA)

ship on her return maiden voyage having been delivered to its owner, Ellerman Lines Ltd, in May. Her cargo was the first of the season's Indian tea crop.

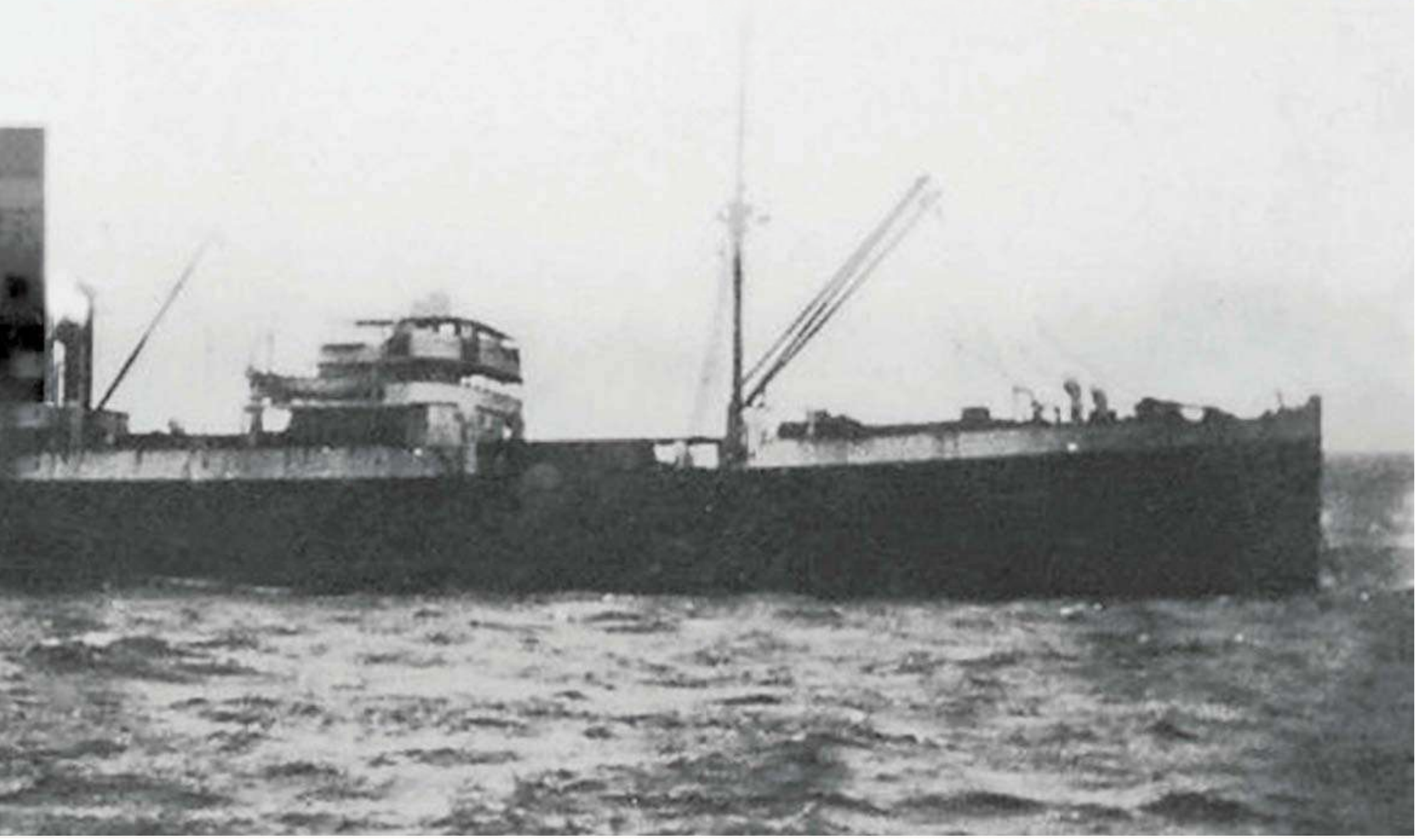
Alan Lees was sitting in his radio room on board the cargo ship listening for news of the war developing in Europe. It was a hot and humid night, and his deck door was open. To his horror he saw, in the corner of his eye, the massive shadow of bows bearing down on his ship.

Believing the new arrival to a Royal Navy warship, Boyck signalled "City of Winchester, Liverpool". Shortly afterwards a German boarding party seized the ship. With an officer and four ratings guarding his crew, Boyck was ordered to head for a group of islands off the coast of Oman.

It was at Hallaniya Island five days later that the British crew was transferred to a German passenger liner and the slow process of transferring coal and provisions aboard *Königsberg* took place. By the afternoon of the 12th the task was complete and scuttling charges were detonated in the engine room. To speed up the sinking of the merchant ship, *Königsberg*'s guns also opened fire.

By that evening, SS *City of Winchester*, the first merchant ship to be lost during the First World War, had settled on the seabed off the coast of Oman leaving only the masts and top of its funnel protruding above the surface. Her crew was later landed in neutral Portuguese East Africa, eventually returning to the UK on the steamer *Palamotta* from Mozambique. The loss of the tea, meanwhile, had an adverse effect on the London market.

Seventy years later a team of divers located the wreck *City of Winchester* lying in ninety feet of water. The entire ship had collapsed leaving the engine and boilers standing proud of the seabed amongst a large collection of scrap plate. Today it is now listed as an Omani heritage site. ●



LORD KITCHENER'S APPEAL

6 AUGUST 1914

Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener. (HMP)

ON 5 August 1914, the day after the United Kingdom declared war on Germany, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener – a national hero of the Sudan and South African campaigns – accepted the vacant post of Secretary of State for War. Against cabinet opinion, Kitchener was one of the few leading British soldiers or statesmen to predict a long and costly war and to foresee that the existing British Expeditionary Force of six infantry divisions and four cavalry brigades would be far too small to play an influential part in a major European conflict.

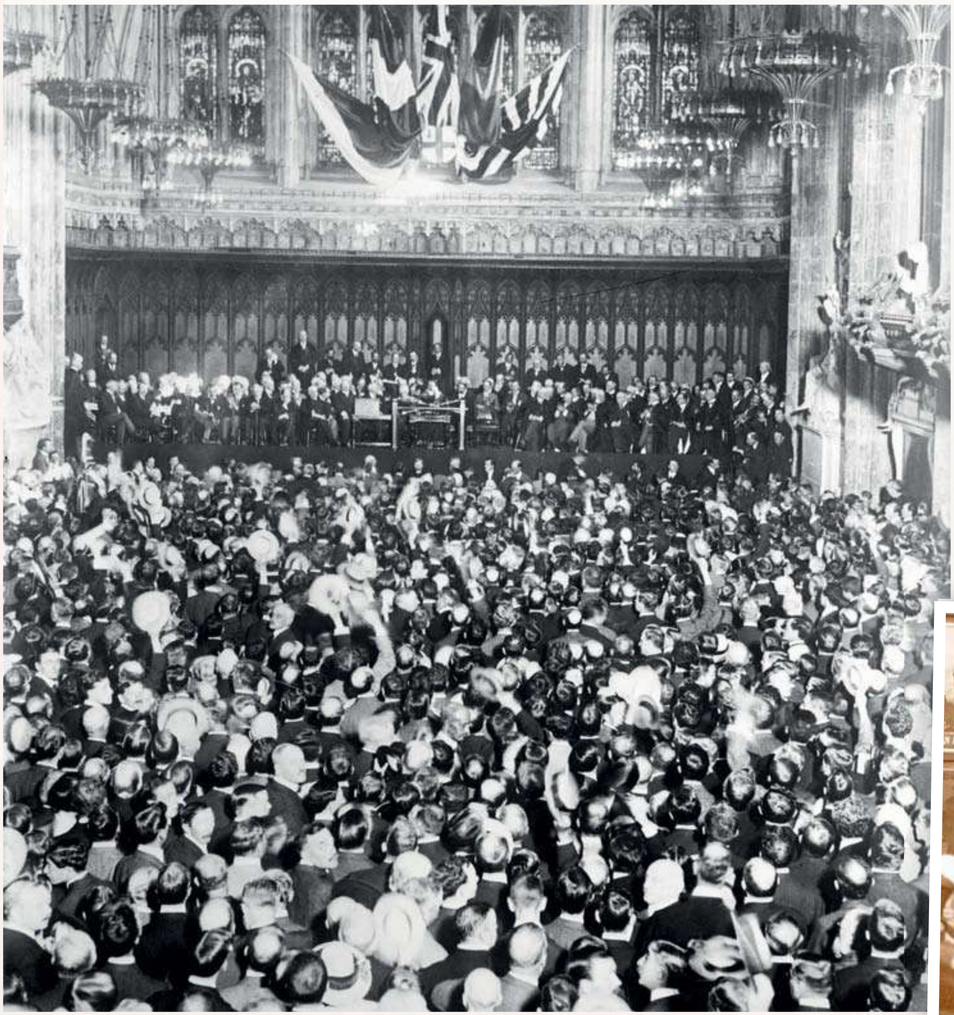
It was against this backdrop that Kitchener decided to raise, by the traditional voluntary means, a series of "New Armies", each duplicating the original BEF. His appeal for 100,000 volunteers was issued on 6 August 1914. He also permitted the part-time Territorial Force – originally intended primarily for home defence – to expand and to volunteer for active service overseas.

Kitchener's target of 100,000 men was achieved within two weeks. Consequently, Army Order 324, dated 21 August 1914, specified that six new divisions would be created from units formed of these volunteers, collectively called Kitchener's Army or K1.

On 28 August 1914, Kitchener asked for another 100,000 men to volunteer (they came to be known as K2), as the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* reported that day: "Lord Kitchener has issued an appeal for another 100,000 men. The age limit is from 19 to 35, the maximum age having been extended from 30. Ex-soldiers will be accepted up to 45 and selected ex-non-commissioned officers up to 50. Enlistment is for the period of the war. Married men or widowers will be accepted and will draw separation allowance under Army conditions."

Others quickly sought to build on Kitchener's appeal. On 15 August 1914, for example, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas Vansittart Bowater, issued his own: "In view of the spirited appeal of Field-Marshal Earl Kitchener for the addition of 100,000 men to the army at this crisis, I look, with great confidence, to the men of the capital of the Empire to place themselves in the van of the movement, and to come forward and enrol themselves in the service of their King and country. I also urge employers to do their part, and keep situations open for patriotic men so enlisting, to the end that none may be prejudiced by responding to their country's call."

After a relatively slow start, there was a sudden surge in recruiting in late August and early September 1914. In all, 478,893 men joined the army between 4 August and 12 September, including 33,204 on 3 September alone – the highest daily total of the war and more than the average annual intake in the years immediately before 1914. ●



ABOVE: **A photograph of a meeting at the Guildhall in London on 4 September 1914, during which Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith encouraged military recruitment.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: **Lord Kitchener pictured giving a speech supporting his appeal for volunteers in August 1914.** (HMP)

ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE
APPEAL TO YOU
ARMY RECRUITING OFFICE

"A GREAT AND URGENT IMPERIAL SERVICE"

7 AUGUST 1914

ABOVE: **British soldiers after capturing a German flag during the South-West Africa Campaign.** (COURTESY OF ELISABETH STURGESS)

THE UNION of South Africa, as a dominion of the British Empire, was automatically drawn into the conflict when Britain declared war on Germany. This put the Union's Prime Minister, Louis Botha, in a difficult position as strong pro-German sympathies existed within the communities of the former Boer republic.

The western borders of the Union faced the German colonial territory of German South-West Africa (now Namibia). On 7 August 1914, the British Government cabled Botha stating that an attack on the German colony would be "a great and urgent imperial service". Three days later Botha replied that he agreed to co-operate with the imperial government and military operations would be undertaken, despite considerable opposition throughout the country.

One of those opposed to action against the German colony was the commander of the Union force on the border with German South-West Africa, Colonel Marie Maritz. As a result of assisting the Germans crushing a rebellion in German South-West Africa some years previously he held the unusual position of holding a rank in both German and British armies. He was also strongly suspected of being in German pay.

As a result of this Botha relieved him of his command. This action caused Maritz to rebel and he threatened to attack the Union forces. This open revolt was met with force, triggering a wider but short-lived rebellion in South Africa, which ended by mid-December.

The aim of the military incursion in to the German territory involved the capture of the ports of Lüderitz Bay and Swakopmund, as well as the silencing of the radio transmitters there and a powerful one in Windhuk which, when conditions permitted, was capable of sending signals to Germany. The ports could be used as bases for German naval raiders, controlled and fed intelligence via the coastal wireless transmitters.

A naval bombardment on 14 September 1914, destroyed the wireless station at Swakopmund and a landing the following day was unopposed. The Union forces, however, did not have it all their own way. On 26 September, a Union force was attacked by German troops at Sandfontein. Despite the South African units making an organized retreat and setting up a defensive perimeter around the nearby Kopje mountain, they were cut off and forced to surrender to the larger German force.

Further actions continued, with a German outpost at Grasplatz being captured, the transmitter at Lüderitz Bay being disabled, and Tschaukaib taken. On 13 December a raiding party advanced on Garub, where it encountered a well-entrenched German position whose defences included two Maxim guns and a light automatic artillery piece. With no artillery, the raiding force could not dislodge the Germans and a stalemate ensued. The South Africans decided to withdraw and to consolidate the Tschaukaib position. Thus ended operations in South-West Africa in 1914. ●

ABOVE: **Bomb explosions can be seen during an air raid by a German aircraft, flown by one *Leutnant* Fielder, against a South African camp near the railway station at Tschaukaib in German South-West Africa, 17 December 1914.** (KOLONIALES BILDARCHIV)

BELOW: **South African troops rest during a march into German South-West Africa. The initial attack was halted in September 1914 when some South African troops deserted to the Germans. Having crushed this rebellion, General Botha led some 40,000 loyal Afrikaners to victory over the Germans in July 1915.** (IWM; Q52393)

DEFENCE OF THE REALM ACT

8 AUGUST 1914

UNDERSTANDABLY, THE outbreak of war brought with it numerous new rules and regulations, the most notable being the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) which was passed on 8 August 1914. Though it was originally intended to control sensitive military information and "for securing public safety", this piece of legislation regulated virtually every aspect of the Home Front in the United Kingdom.

In many ways the Defence of the Realm Act was one of the most extraordinary legislative measures ever passed by the British Parliament. Aware of the impact that it would have, the legislation included the following caveat: "The ordinary avocations of life and the enjoyment of property will be interfered with as little as may be permitted by the exigencies of the measures required to be taken for securing the public safety and the defence of the Realm."

The initial legislation which became law in August 1914 was followed by a second, revised and expanded, version of the emergency legislation that was enshrined in the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act of 27 November 1914. In all its forms, DORA specified a number of actions for which civilians could be tried by court martial – there were, in fact, sixty-three different regulations which either constituted or defined crimes under the Act. These included communicating with the enemy, spreading false reports or reports likely to cause disaffection, giving assistance to the enemy or endangering the successful prosecution of the war.

Any individual deemed by the military authorities to be guilty of any of these offences could be arrested and tried just as if subject to military law, and as if he or she had, on active service, committed an offence under the Army Act. In other words, the military authorities could arrest any persons they pleased and, after court

ABOVE: **Troops of the 1st/5th Battalion King's Own, under the command of one Sergeant Tyson, at a sentry post guarding the Great Western Railway line near Didcot in 1914.** (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM;

BELOW: **Under the regulations brought in under the Defence of the Realm Act, people were forbidden to loiter near bridges and tunnels. Military guards soon appeared across the United Kingdom's transport infrastructure, including on the railway and canal networks. Here, Private James Radcliffe Mawson of the 1st/5th Battalion King's Own is pictured on sentry duty at Didcot Railway Station in Oxfordshire during September 1914. Mawson died of wounds on 24 April 1915.** (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM; KO0784/002) KO0784/005)

GIVING DRINK TO SOLDIERS WHILE ON DUTY: SERIOUS CASE

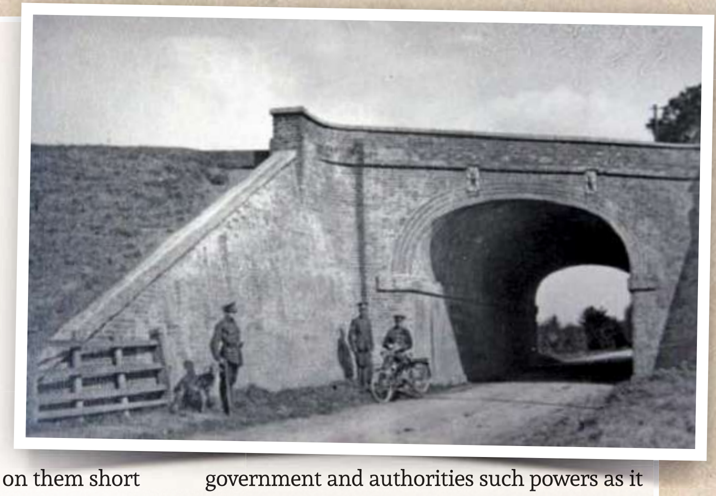
THE *HULL Daily Mail* of Tuesday, 29 December 1914, included this account of a court case brought under the Defence of the Realm Act:

"At the London Mansion House Police-court on Monday, William Stratton, alias Welling (35), of Stepney Causeway, and Thomas Madgett (34), of Stepney, were charged, under the Defence of the Realm Act with supplying Private Henry Capp with liquor while on duty at Tower Bridge. Stratton was charged further with being a deserter from the Yorkshire Regiment.

"Captain Gilchrist, of the National Reserve Territorials, said that on Saturday afternoon he found some of the guard intoxicated at Tower Bridge. He placed a private and two corporals under arrest. In the engine room he found the two prisoners, with a stone jar. Stratton had a bottle in his pocket … Captain Gilchrist said the military authorities considered this a very serious case. The Magistrate fined each prisoner £5."

ABOVE: A guard party from the 1st/5th Battalion King's Own preparing a meal beside the railway line at North Moreton, near Didcot. Sergeant C. Austin is on the extreme right; he went across to France on 14 February 1915, and was wounded, not returning to duty until 13 April 1915. (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM; KO0784/007)

RIGHT: A guard on a railway bridge at South Moreton, near Didcot, in 1914. To secure the safety of means of communication and the use of railways, docks, and harbours, a number of new regulations were created under DORA. It was, for example, forbidden to trespass on any railway, or loiter under or near any bridge, viaduct, or culvert, over which a railway passed. For some unknown reason the sentry appears to be accompanied by a goat! (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM; KO0784/009)



martial, inflict any sentence on them short of death.

In addition, the military authorities were allowed to demand the whole or part of the output of any factory or workshop dealing with military supplies, and to take possession of any factory or workshop they required. They were also allowed to take any land they needed. This, in effect, made the civil administration of the country entirely subservient to the military administration.

The introduction of the Act surprised some, and while the majority of the British population were willing to accept it, believing that the powers under it would not be abused, a number of eminent peers, including several famous judges, objected. One of those who challenged DORA was Lord Halsbury, who declared that he saw no necessity to get rid of the fabric of personal liberty that had been built up for many generations: "I do not think that the liberty of the subject is so trifling a matter that it can be swept away in a moment because some of us are in a panic."

The Act, nevertheless, passed into law. The view held by some that it was not right that all the ancient limitations on the supreme authority should go gained much support, and when the House of Lords met on 7 January 1915, Lord Parmoor introduced an amending Bill. This, he proposed, would restore to citizens their right to be tried by the ordinary courts. The government promised, if this Bill was withdrawn, to bring in a similar measure itself. It did so, and a new law was passed, giving any accused civilian the right to choose whether he should be tried by civil court or court martial. It was provided, however, that in ease of special emergency, such as invasion, this choice would be withdrawn.

In reality, the effect of the Defence of the Realm Act, even as amended, provided the government and authorities such powers as it had never enjoyed before.

For example, regulations were specifically introduced to prevent communicating any information calculated to be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy and what was also described as for "disloyal purposes". This specifically included the publishing or communicating of any information relating to the movement or disposition of any of military forces or materials, information relating to plans for naval or military operations and any works or measures connected with defence fortifications. It was specifically forbidden to produce any photograph, sketch, plan, or model of any naval or military work, any dock or harbour work and the like, or even to be in possession of any material that would enable this to be done.

It became illegal to elicit information from any member of the armed forces employed in the defence of any railway, dock, or harbour by buying or giving any intoxicating liquor when on or off duty, either with or without any intent to make them drunk. It was also illegal to create disaffection or alarm among any of His Majesty's Forces or among the civilian population.

The ordinary civilian was no longer free to go where he pleased, should the military authorities desire to stop him. Any visitor to a strange place had to fill in a form declaring his identity; hotel guests had to be registered in the same way as had long been the case on the Continent. At the same time, the act of leaving or entering the UK was made one of great difficulty by severe passport regulations.

However, wrote one commentator, "Great Britain was fighting for her life, and her people knew that, faced with this supreme issue, the rights and privileges of ordinary times must of necessity go". ●

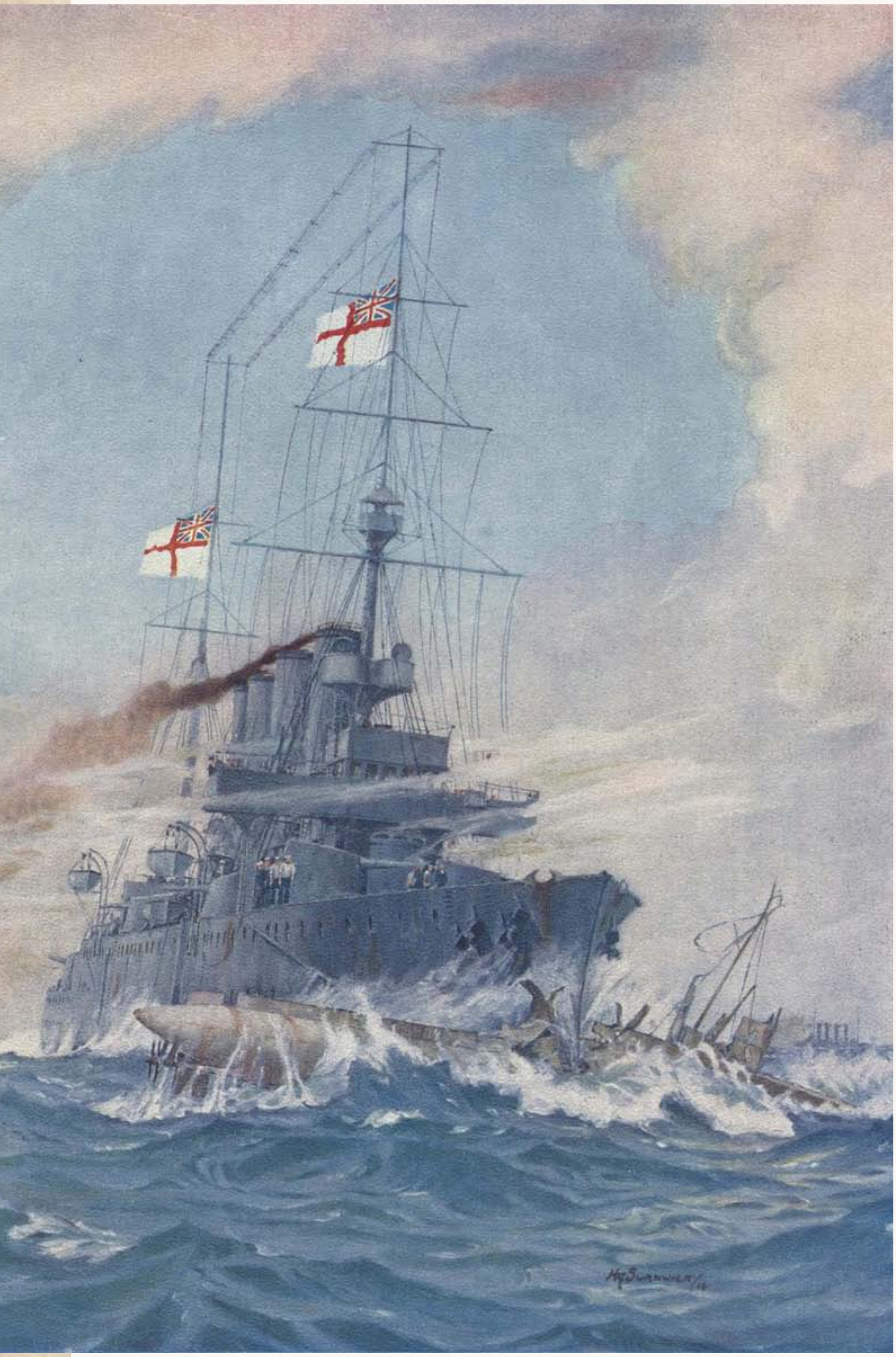
DANGER OF SKETCHING

JUST HOW easily ordinary citizens could fall foul of the Defence of the Realm Act was illustrated by the following court case which was reported in the Liverpool Echo on Thursday, 15 October 1914:

"Maurice Walmsley, the … youth who was apprehended while sketching the Midland Railway Viaduct, which spans the river Aire at Charlestown, Baildon, has been released. The military authorities accepted his explanation that, as a student at the Bradford Technical Colleague, he was merely practising sketching. It was pointed out to him that he had contravened the Defence of the Realm Act, and the sketch was confiscated."

FIRST U-BOAT OF WAR WAS SUNK

9 AUGUST 1914



ABOVE: **A painting depicting the final moments of *U-15*.**

ON 8 August 1914, the First Light Cruiser Squadron, part of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet based at Scapa Flow, had set out on a patrol. Comprising HMS *Southampton*, HMS *Birmingham*, HMS *Liverpool*, HMS *Falmouth*, and the recently joined HMS *Nottingham*, the First Light Cruiser Squadron had been ordered to capture or sunk German trawlers, as well as destroy the wireless apparatus on any neutral trawlers encountered.

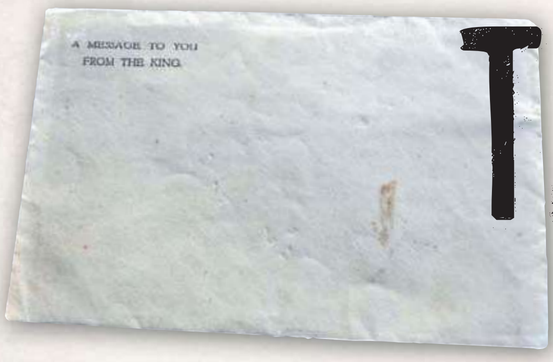
The patrol was relatively uneventful until about 03.00 hours on the morning of Sunday, 9 August 1914, at which point the cruisers were to the northward of Kinnaird Head on the east coast of Scotland. Lieutenant Stephen King-Hall, who had just come off the first watch, later recalled what happened next:

"I was awakened by the noise of the alarm bells ringing furiously ... I pulled on some clothes and ran up on deck, to find it was early dawn, rainy and misty. Every second or so the mistiness ahead was illuminated by a yellow flash, and the crash of a gun followed.

"Suddenly the *Birmingham* loomed up straight ahead, or a shade on our starboard bow, distant about 2½ cables (500 yards). It was difficult at the moment to say whether the shells falling between us and the *Birmingham* were being fired by the *Birmingham*, or at her from a ship on the far side. I restrained our quarter-deck guns' crew from firing into the *Birmingham*; she looked rather Teutonic in the early morning light. The mystery of the alarm was settled by the sudden appearance of part of the conning-tower of a German submarine, exactly between ourselves and the *Birmingham*. How the *Birmingham* actually turned and rammed her I could not see; but she did, and when the *Birmingham* turned away, a large oily pool, bubbling furiously, with three black objects resembling air-flasks floating in it, was all that remained of the U-boat."

The victim of the ramming by HMS *Birmingham* was the Type U13 submarine *U-15*. Despite the thick fog, an alert look-out on the cruiser had spotted *U-15* stationary on the surface, her engines having apparently failed. *Birmingham*'s guns opened fire, damaging the submarine's conning tower and periscope. At the same time, her captain, Captain Arthur Duff, ordered the cruiser's engines to full speed. At the same time, the U-boat's commander, *Kapitänleutnant* Richard Pohle, instructed his crew to dive, but his actions were too late. Moments later HMS *Birmingham*'s bows slammed into *U-15*. The U-boat rolled over and sank with the loss of all hands – twenty-five men in total. She was the first U-boat loss to an enemy warship and the first U-boat sunk in the First World War. ●

THE KING'S MESSAGE



ABOVE: An envelope in which one soldier received his copy of the King's message.

9 AUGUST 1914

WITH EVERY day that passed following the outbreak of war, the pace at which British troops were crossing the Channel to France did not slacken. Each member of the BEF, before he left British shores, received a message from King George V, read by the various Commanding Officers to their men before they embarked.

Dated Sunday, 9 August 1914, in his message the King stated: "You are leaving home to fight for the safety and honour of my Empire. Belgium, which country we are pledged to defend, has been attacked, and France is about to be invaded by the same powerful foe. I have implicit confidence in you, my soldiers.

"Duty is your watchword, and I know your duty will be nobly done. I shall follow your every movement with the deepest interest, and mark with eager satisfaction your daily progress. Indeed, your welfare will never be absent from my thoughts. I pray God to bless you and guard you, and bring you back victorious."

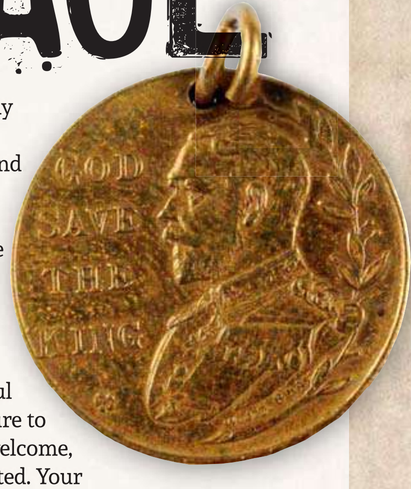
The soldiers also received, "and were bidden to carry with them in their pay-books", the following set of instructions from Lord Kitchener:

"You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy," wrote Kitchener. "You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British Empire depends on your individual conduct.

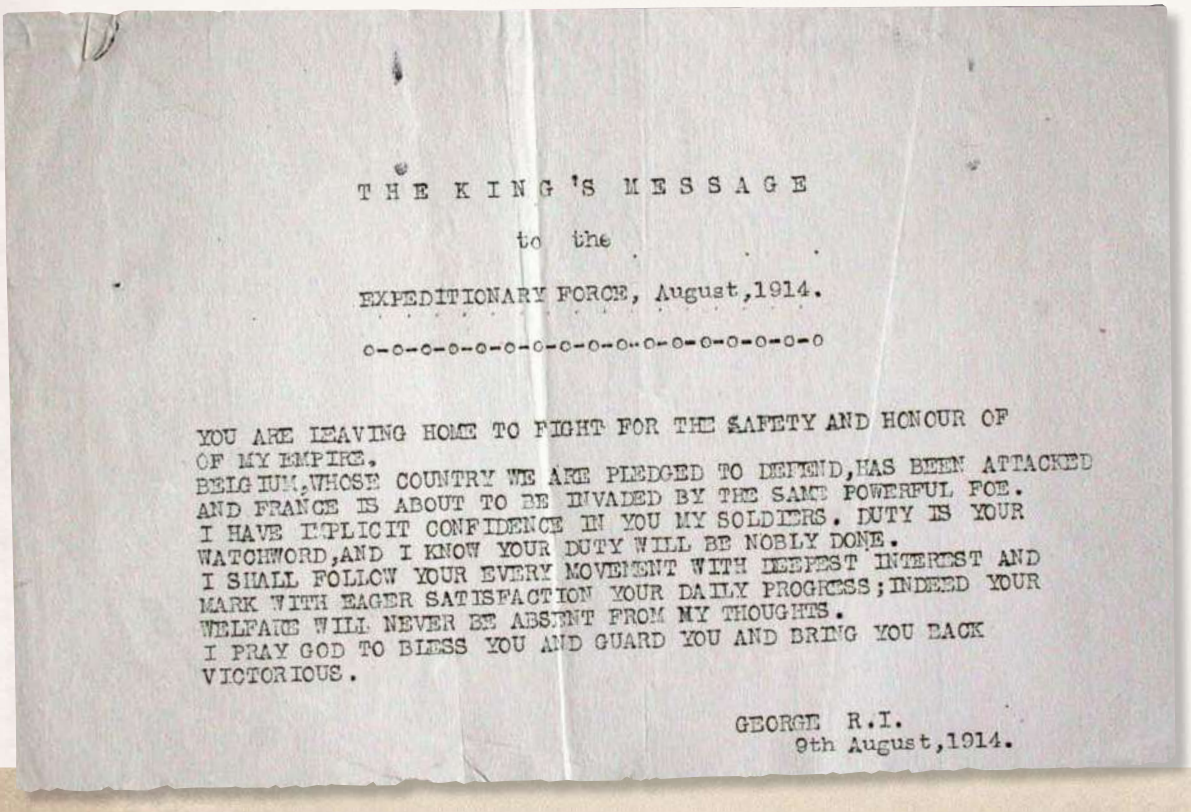
"It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle. The operations in which you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your country no better service than by showing yourselves in France and Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

"Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome, and to be trusted. Your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust.

"Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound, so be constantly on your guard against any excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations, both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy. Do your duty bravely. Fear God. Honour the King." ●



ABOVE: This commemorative medallion was produced in the aftermath of the King's message – an extract of which is included on its reverse. All that is known of this medallion is that it was manufactured by "W.J.O." of Birmingham. (IWM; EPH4542)



THE KING'S MESSAGE

to the

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, August,1914.

o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o

YOU ARE LEAVING HOME TO FIGHT FOR THE SAFETY AND HONOUR OF
OF MY EMPIRE.
BELGIUM,WHOSE COUNTRY WE ARE PLEDGED TO DEFEND,HAS BEEN ATTACKED
AND FRANCE IS ABOUT TO BE INVADED BY THE SAME POWERFUL FOE.
I HAVE IMPLICIT CONFIDENCE IN YOU MY SOLDIERS. DUTY IS YOUR
WATCHWORD,AND I KNOW YOUR DUTY WILL BE NOBLY DONE.
I SHALL FOLLOW YOUR EVERY MOVEMENT WITH DEEPEST INTEREST AND
MARK WITH EAGER SATISFACTION YOUR DAILY PROGRESS;INDEED YOUR
WELFARE WILL NEVER BE ABSENT FROM MY THOUGHTS.
I PRAY GOD TO BLESS YOU AND GUARD YOU AND BRING YOU BACK
VICTORIOUS.

GEORGE R.I.
9th August,1914.

LEFT: An example of the copies of the King's message which were distributed to the men of the King's Own Royal Regiment during August 1914. (KING'S OWN ROYAL REGIMENT MUSEUM; KO0418/11)

THE RFC HEADS TO FRANCE

13 AUGUST 1914

IN THE day's following the outbreak of war, the programme for the mobilization of the Royal Flying Corps was, in the main, successfully carried out. As part of this, some of the first elements of the RFC to head across the Channel were HQ personnel. Having left Farnborough for Southampton on the night of 11 August 1914, they embarked on the morning of the 13th. As their troopship prepared to sail for France, a number of RFC squadrons took off to make a similar journey.

Of the squadrons that flew to France, 2 Squadron, which had been based at Montrose, had the hardest task. Its pilots started on their southward flight to Farnborough as early as 3 August and after a number of accidents they all reached Dover. No.3 Squadron was at Netheravon, in Wiltshire, when war broke out. On 12 August its pilots flew to Dover, though the squadron suffered a loss at Netheravon when Second Lieutenant R.R. Skene, with Air Mechanic R. K. Barlow as passenger, crashed his 'plane soon after taking off. Both pilot and passenger were killed.

For its part, 4 Squadron had been sent to Eastchurch on 31 July 1914, to assist the Royal Navy in its preparations for home defence as well as prepare for mobilization. It was from Eastchurch that 4 Squadron flew to Dover. By the evening of 12 August, the aircraft of Nos. 2, 3, and 4 squadrons had been concentrated together. Just before midnight, the final orders arrived: "All machines to be ready to fly over at 6.0 a.m. the following morning, the 13th of August."

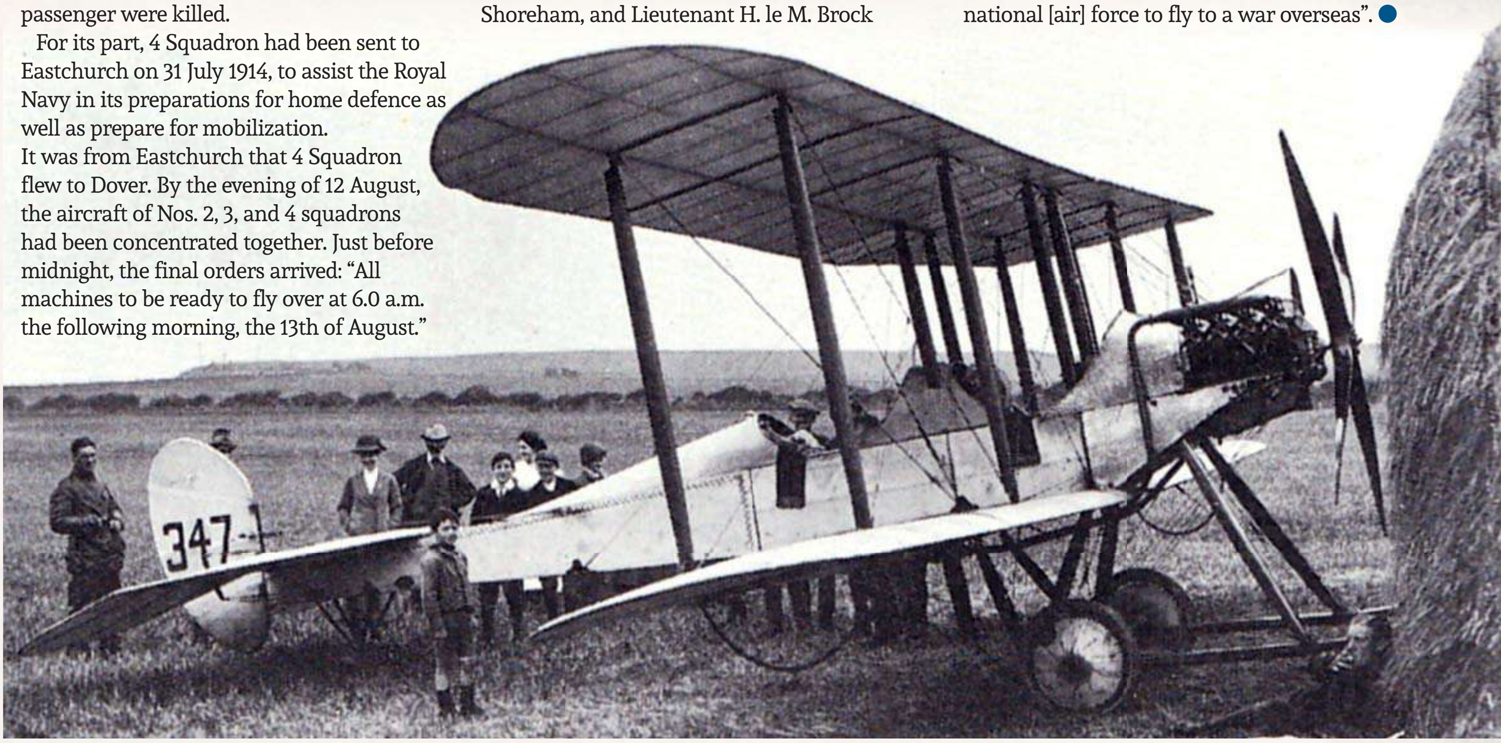
The first aircraft of 2 Squadron to take off departed from Dover at 06.25 hours that morning; the first to arrive landed at Amiens at 08.20 hours. This machine was flown by Lieutenant H.D. Harvey-Kelly (who would subsequently be killed in action in 1917). The aircraft of 3 Squadron also arrived safely at Amiens, with the exception of one piloted by Second Lieutenant E.N. Fuller who, along with his mechanic, did not rejoin his squadron at Maubeuge until five days later.

Whilst one flight of 4 Squadron remained at Dover to carry out patrol duties, some of the remainder were damaged on the way over by following their leader, Captain F.J.L. Cogan, who was forced, by engine failure, to land in a ploughed field in France.

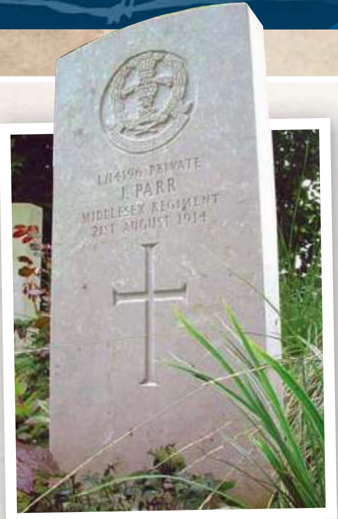
No.5 Squadron moved a little later than the other three, having been delayed by a shortage of shipping and a series of accidents to its aircraft. On 14 August, when starting out for Dover, Captain G.I. Carmichael wrecked his machine at Gosport. On the same day Lieutenant R.O. Abercromby and Lieutenant H.F. Glanville damaged their machines at Shoreham, and Lieutenant H. le M. Brock damaged his at Falmer. Such incidents aside, the squadron finally took off from Dover, for France, on 15 August. Even then, the journey was not without further incident when Lieutenant R.M. Vaughan, made a forced landing near Boulogne. He was promptly arrested by the French and was imprisoned for nearly a week.

In due course, all four of the initial RFC squadrons deployed to France were ready for operations. They represented, noted the Official Historian of the RFC, the "first organized national [air] force to fly to a war overseas". ●

ABOVE: **Situated near Cliff Road between Dover and St Margaret's at Cliffe, this memorial commemorates the departure of the RFC's first four squadrons to head to France as part of the BEF. Behind are the two remaining truncated masts from the Swingate Chain Home radar station.** (COURTESY OF E. GAMMIE; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)



ABOVE: **The first British pilot to land in France in 1914 was Major Hubert Dunsterville Harvey-Kelly DSO, Royal Irish Regiment attached to the RFC. He landed his Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c at Amiens – he can be seen in this image, taken shortly before his departure for France, lying on the ground next to the haystack studying a map. Harvey-Kelly was killed on 29 April 1917, the 25th victim of the German ace *Leutnant* Kurt Wolff of *Jasta* 11.** (HMP)



LEFT: **The headstone that marks the last resting place of Private John Parr. Though Parr is stated to have been aged 20 at the time of his death, he was, having been born in 1898, only 16.** (HMP)

RIGHT: **A British howitzer in position during the fighting at Mons.** (WW1IMAGES)

FIRST BRITISH SOLDIER KILLED IN ACTION

A SHORT distance to the south-east of the city of Mons is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery of St. Symphorien.

Immediately after the Battle of Mons in August 1914, the victorious German troops began to bury the dead of both the British Expeditionary Force and von Kluck's German 1st Army in the remains of a disused potash mine on the outskirts of this old Belgian city. Unlike the usual symmetrical rows of graves, this cemetery was shaped around the heaps of spoil from an old mine. Consequently, the gravestones are found in circular, shaded groves and narrow, curved glades. Glimpsed through branches and leaves are the simple crosses and solid grey monoliths of German headstones and the creamy Portland stone of Commonwealth graves.

One of the latter marks the last resting place of Private L/14196 John Parr of the 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment – the first British soldier to be killed in action in the First World War.

Having disembarked at Boulogne on 14 August, the battalion soon found itself moving east towards the front in Belgium. Exactly how, and indeed when, John Parr died is, however, the subject of some confusion. His headstone states that he was killed in action on 21 August 1914. On that day, after a march of fifteen miles the Middlesex went into billets in the village of Bettignies which lay directly south of Mons. It has been said that Parr, as "a reconnaissance cyclist", and one other soldier were instructed to try and locate the enemy. They set off on bicycles that evening and eventually encountered German troops, reportedly in the area of Obourg. Parr remained behind to monitor the enemy whilst his comrade pedalled back to battalion HQ to report. Nothing more was seen of Parr until his body was interred at St. Symphorien.

The regimental history of the Middlesex Regiment states that although two platoons of 'D' Company were part of a brigade outpost line two miles north of Bettignies, the night of 21 August passed "without incident". It seems that in the ensuing retreat from Mons, no-one knew what had really happened to John Parr. When his mother wrote to the authorities to enquire about her son, the Middlesex Regiment was unable to provide her with any information.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records note that Parr "was fatally wounded during an encounter with a German patrol two days before the battle [of Mons], thus becoming the first British soldier to be killed in action on the Western Front". ●

21 AUGUST 1914

BELOW: **The Middlesex Regiment went into action until the morning of 23 August 1914. The battalion had been ordered to defend the canal railway crossing at Obourg station and duly took up positions in and around the station which commanded the bridge. The men came under heavy artillery fire from around 08.00 hours, followed by an infantry attack by six German battalions. The rapid fire of the Middlesex held off the Germans all morning. Despite being reinforced by two companies of the 2nd Battalion the Royal Irish Regiment, the Middlesex were forced to withdraw shortly after midday. On the station roof one man remained alone, holding the enemy back whilst his comrades retreated. This unidentified soldier fought on by himself until he was killed. The spot where this lone soldier carried out his gallant deed is marked by a plaque fixed to the front of a brick pillar.** (HMP)

OTHER EVENTS ON 21 AUGUST 1914

- The British concentration in France was practically complete.
- An Anglo-French loan of £20m to the Belgian government was announced.
- After two days' fighting, Russian troops routed three German army corps in East Prussia.

THE FIRST SHOT

22 AUGUST 1914

MAIN PICTURE: A British cavalry unit on the move in the summer of 1914. It was on 15 August 1914, that Trooper E. Thomas, of 'C' Squadron 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards, part of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade in the Cavalry Division, left his barracks at Tidworth along with the rest of his regiment. By noon the same day they had all embarked on the troopship HMT *Winnifrian*, arriving at Boulogne the following afternoon. After a few days, on the 19th, they reached their camp at Hauport. Just three days later Trooper Thomas would earn himself a place in history. (HMP)

BELOW: The area where the first shot was fired pictured during the years immediately after the end of the First World War.

THREE DAYS before the BEF had landed on the Continent, German forces had invaded Belgium and France. The main German thrust was delivered by General von Kluck's 1st Army which was to advance through Liège, sweep passed Brussels and Mons and down into northern France. But von Kluck met unexpectedly stiff resistance from the ring of forts built to protect Liège and defend the bridges over the River Meuse.

Whilst the Germans were fighting their way through Liège, the BEF moved into Belgium to counter the German advance. Though the original plan of operations was for a joint Franco-British attack, the French had already suffered major reverses and the wisest course of action for the BEF was to adopt a defensive stance until the situation stabilised. The delay at Liège to von Kluck's march meant that the 1st Army did not reach Brussels until 20 August and it gave the BEF chance to establish a hurried defensive position before the Germans were upon them. The place selected for the British stand was at the Belgian town of Mons.

Ahead of the main body of the BEF was the cavalry, whose job it was to locate the enemy. On 22 August the 2nd Cavalry Brigade had pushed patrols northwards and eastwards, in the direction from which it was known that the Germans were advancing. 'C' Squadron, 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards was leading the patrol as "Contact Squadron". The squadron's orders, which had been delivered by the Dragoon Guards' Adjutant, Captain Richard Oldrey, were: "There are Uhlans over there – you're to send out a patrol, hit 'em hard without actually getting involved in a major scrap and then get out of it fast. Brigade want identification of the units heading this way – shoulder numerals, identification papers and so forth. Good luck."

Major Bridges, who commanded the squadron, decided to set an ambush. He placed two troops in ambush positions near the Château de Ghislain on either side of the Maisières to Casteau road and held the other two troops under Captain Charles Hornby out of site to the rear. Hornby ordered the 1st Troop to draw sabres whilst the 4th Troop was told to make ready for dismounted action.

At about 07.00 hours, one of the scouts reported, "enemy coming down main road". This was a patrol from the 4th Cuirassiers of the German 9th Cavalry Division. The Cuirassiers halted as if they had "smelt a rat". Seeing this Bridges called out to Hornby:

ABOVE: **The man who fired the first shot of the First World War – Trooper E. Thomas, of ‘C’ Squadron, 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards – seen here with his wife and children during one of his periods of wartime leave. By this time he has been promoted to Sergeant.**

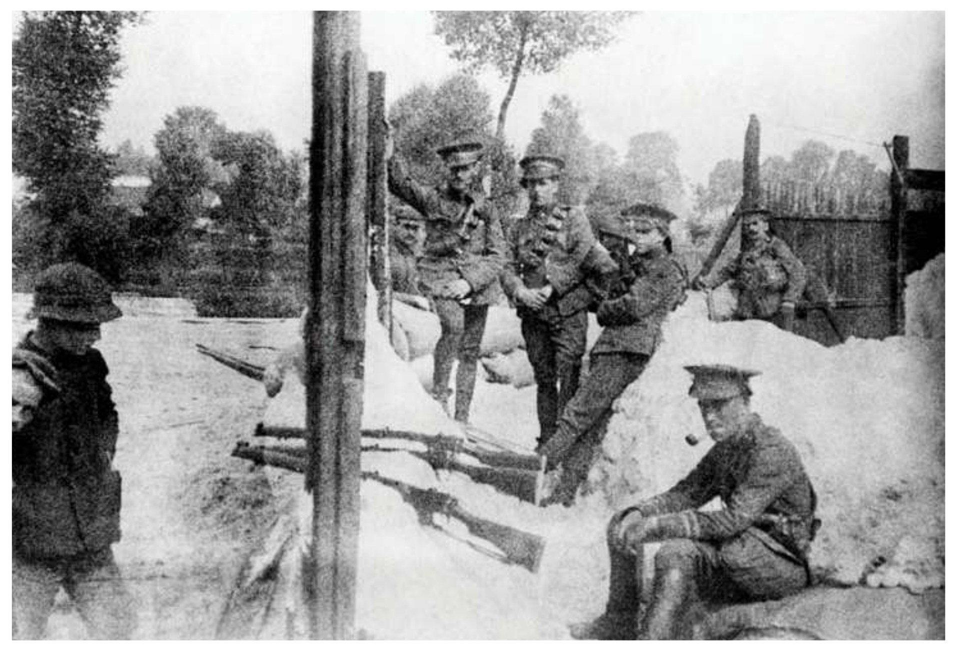
ABOVE: **The “First Shot Memorial” near Mons. Located a short distance from the actual spot where Thomas opened fire, the memorial was unveiled on Sunday, 20 August 1939. Amongst those present were the widow of Corporal Thomas and their daughter, as well as Major, as he was by then (having been promoted on 5 August 1915), Charles Hornby. Just two weeks later to the day war was again declared on Germany.** (HMP)

“Now’s your chance, Charles – after them with the sword”. Hornby ordered No.1 Troop to charge.

With sabres drawn, the Dragoons scattered the Cuirassiers left and right. Following behind was No.4 Troop, and at the command “4th Troop, dismounted action”, the Dragoon Guards leapt to the ground and found cover for their horses by the side of the chateau wall.

“Bullets were flying past us and all round us, and possibly because I was rather noted for my quick movements and athletic ability in those days I was first in action”, recalled one of those involved, Drummer E. Thomas. “I could see a German cavalry officer some four hundred yards away standing mounted in full view of me, gesticulating to the left and to the right as he disposed of his dismounted men and ordered them to take up their firing positions to engage us.

“Immediately I saw him I took aim, pulled the trigger and automatically, almost as it seemed instantaneously, he fell to the ground.” It was the first British shot of the First World War and the first shot discharged by a British soldier on the Continent, in action against the enemy, since the Battle of Waterloo.



ABOVE: **Soldiers of the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards take up defensive positions near Mons during August 1914.** (IWM; Q83507)

The Germans, however, responded quickly. “From every direction”, continued Thomas, “the air above us was thick with rifle and machine-gun bullets, the whistling noise of them and the little flurries of hay which they sent up like smoke as they hit upon the stacks that were all around.”

The fire-fight did not last long. The Cuirassiers were outnumbered and they remounted and galloped back along the Brussels road. Hornby took up the pursuit. “The chase went on for a mile”, remembered Trooper Ted Worrell, “but we were better mounted and caught up with them on the outskirts of Soignies and there was a proper old melee. Captain Hornby ran his sword through one Jerry and Sgt. Major Sharpe got another. There was a fair old noise what with the clatter of hooves and a lot of shouting. The Jerries couldn’t manage their long lances at close quarters and several threw them away and tried to surrender but we weren’t in no mood to take prisoners and we downed a lot of them before they managed to break it off and gallop away. Our horses were blown so Capt. Hornby decided not to give chase.”

The Dragoon Guards had done their job. They had located the Germans and in the sabre charge had taken five prisoners. For his successful encounter with the German cavalry, as well as other actions during the fighting around Mons, Captain Charles Beck Hornby was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. It was, according to some accounts, the British Army’s first gallantry award of the First World War, though not the first to be gazetted.

ABOVE: **Men and horses of a British cavalry unit, in this case the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen’s Bays), pictured near the front.**

The squadron was congratulated in an “Operational Order” by General Sir Henry de Beauvoir de Lisle who declared that the “spirited” action of the Dragoons had established “the moral superiority of our cavalry from the first over that of the German cavalry”. ●

THE BRITISH Expeditionary Force completed its assembly in the area between Maubeuge and Le Cateau on 20 August 1914. The plan (Plan XVII) was that the BEF would advance into Belgium alongside the French Fifth Army under General Lanrezac to sweep aside, or outflank, the supposedly weak right flank of the German Army.

This was all part of a strategy that had been worked out years before based on the French theory that the Germans would attempt to invade across the Franco-German border where the bulk of the French Army was massed. The British force, small in comparison with the 824,000-strong French Army, was merely to protect the Allied flank on the border with neutral Belgium. The invasion of Belgium by the Germans had not changed Allied strategy as the French considered it merely a feint to draw troops away from the main attack.

The Belgians delayed the German advance for eighteen crucial days, eventually being driven back to their National Redoubt built around Antwerp. With the Germans marching on Brussels, the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre, instructed his left wing, which included the BEF, to move into Belgium to confront the enemy.

With Lanrezac's forces therefore deploying in Belgium, the BEF also began its movement northwards. It was expected that it would be marching for three days to take up a line facing northeast between Lens and the town of Binche in the Belgian province of Hainaut. Information on the movements of the enemy was sparse and the BEF had no idea that it was on a collision course with the German First Army which, with its four army corps, numbered around 160,000 men with 600 field guns. Sir John French's I and II Corps amounted to half that figure, with half as many guns. Disaster loomed.

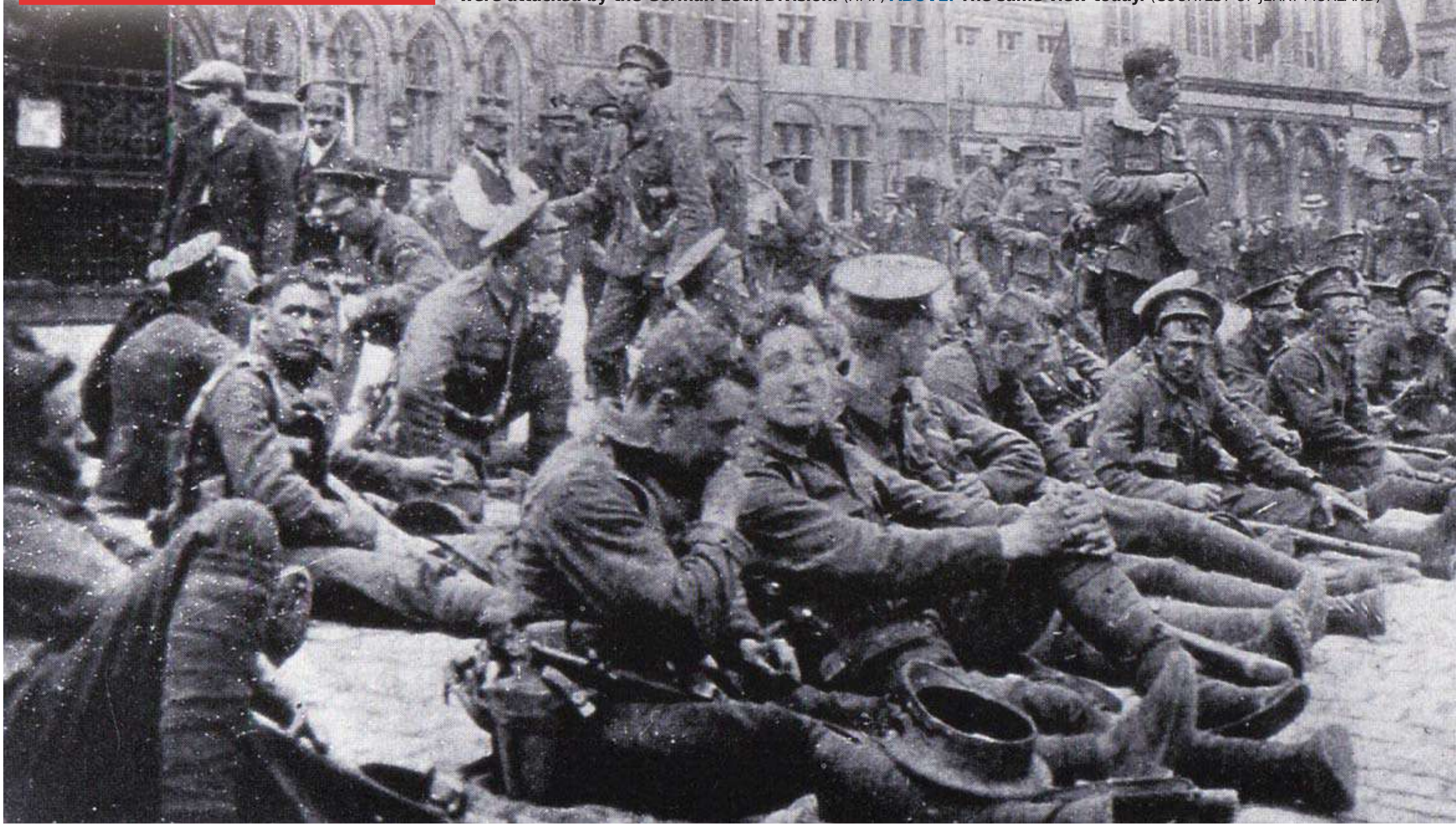
After contact had been made by the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, Sir John French knew that the enemy was close and the BEF took up defensive positions along the Mons-Condé Canal. It was ready to fight its first large battle of the war. The advantage that Mons had was that it was bisected by the Mons-Condé Canal. This gave the BEF a line they could defend with some hope of success if the Germans should attack.

It was General Smith-Dorrien's II Corps, principally its 3rd Division, which was given the task of defending the canal, facing north. I Corps, under General Haig, was drawn back across II Corps' right flank and in contact with the French left wing, though this link was a tenuous one. The BEF's left flank was held by the Cavalry Division.

THE BATTLE OF MONS

23 AUGUST 1914

BELOW: On the eve of what was the BEF's first major action of the war, men of 'A' Company, 4th Royal Fusiliers rest in the Grand Place at Mons after a tiring march forward. Not long after this picture was taken the battalion moved up into positions on the Canal de Condé. It was there, the following day, where they were attacked by the German 18th Division. (HMP) **ABOVE: The same view today.** (COURTESY OF JERRY MURLAND)



ABOVE: Men of the BEF pictured at their last camp before Mons – "the men are standing at ease during the taking of a parade state before they began the long trek to meet the Germans at Mons".

ABOVE: The 9th Lancers arriving at Mons, Friday, 21 August 1914. These men were reputedly the first British troops to arrive at Mons, and "were the vanguard of the millions of men who were to follow them to the front during the four years of war". (HMP)

The main focus of the German attack was the salient formed by the loop in the canal. The Germans advanced confidently and the British, equally confidently, shot them down. "They were in solid square blocks, standing out sharply against the skyline," remembered one British sergeant, "and you couldn't help hitting them ... We lay in our trenches with not a sound or sign to tell them of what was before them. They crept nearer, and then our officers gave the word ... They seemed to stagger like a drunk man hit suddenly between the eyes, after which they made a run for us, shouting some outlandish cry that we couldn't make out."

Another soldier, a Gordon Highlander, made a similar observation: "They advanced in companies quite 150 men in files five deep, and our rifle has a flat trajectory up to 600 yards. Guess the result. We could steady our rifles on the trench and take deliberate aim. The first company were simply blasted away to Heaven by a volley at 700 yards, and their insane formation every bullet was almost sure to find two billets."

"We struggled through a mass of dense undergrowth, and reached the farther edge with our faces and hands scratched all over, but otherwise met no opposition," Walter Bloem of the Royal Prussian Grenadier Regiment Carl von Preußen, 2nd Brandenburg, Nr 12 – the Brandenburg Grenadiers – later wrote. "We had no sooner left the edge of the wood than a volley of bullets whistled past our noses and cracked into the trees behind. Five or six cries near me, five or six of my grey lads collapsed on the grass. Damn it! This was serious."

Bloem's men managed to reach some scattered farm buildings in the meadow across which they were advancing. "As we left the buildings and were extending out again," he continued, "another shower of bullets came across the meadow and rattled against the walls and all about us. More cries, more men fell. In front a farm track on a slightly raised embankment crossed our direction ... Astounding that any of us still lived. The bullets hummed about me like a swarm of angry hornets. I felt death, my own death, very, very near me; and yet it was all so strangely unreal."

Despite their heavy losses, the Germans massively outnumbered the British and it was not just the rifle fire that kept the Germans from overrunning the BEF's positions, but also, and principally, the canal which separated the opposing forces. It was obvious that the Germans would make every effort to cross it and the bridges soon came under heavy attack.

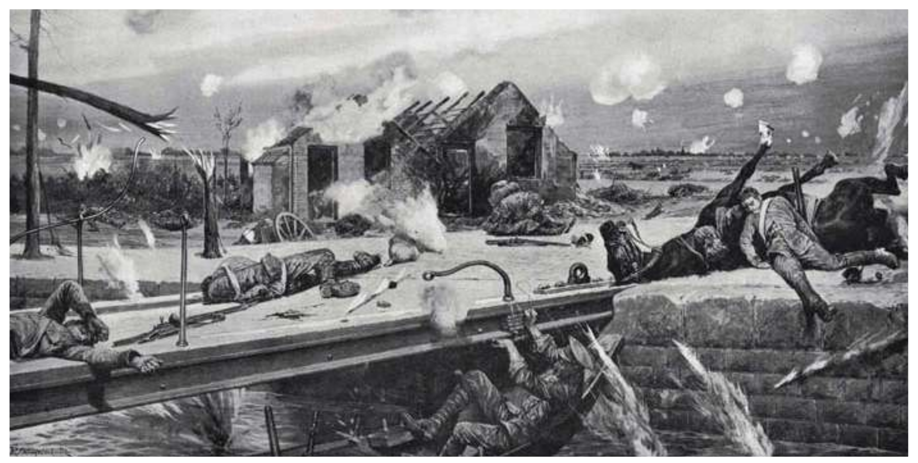
Early in the day Smith-Dorrien had given orders that the bridges should be prepared for demolition by the Royal Engineers. The timing of their destruction, however, was delegated to divisional level or even lower and as a result some of the bridges were not prepared for demolition until they were actually being fought over.

Such was the overwhelming strength of the Germans they could not be held back indefinitely and by the afternoon enemy units had begun to cross the canal. The 3rd Division was therefore forced to withdraw from the salient and the 5th Division was obliged to follow suit.

By nightfall II Corps had formed a new defensive line. Sir John French was determined to hold this new line, but everything depended on what the French Fifth Army on his right flank would do. Would the French hold their ground, or would they be forced to retreat? ●

OTHER EVENTS ON 23 AUGUST 1914

- Japan declared war on Germany.
- French troops withdrew from Lorraine.
- Three of the Namur forts fell to German troops; the town was evacuated by the Allies.



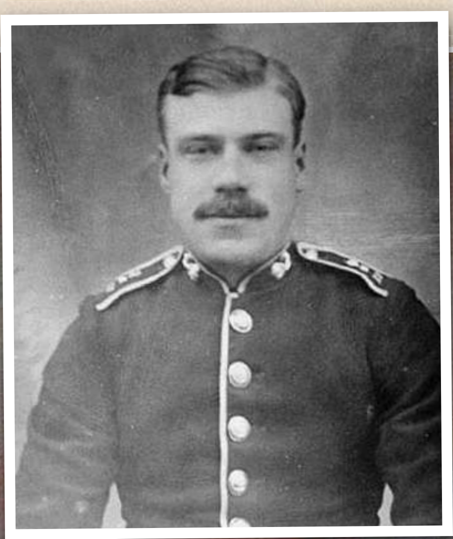
ABOVE: A contemporary artist's depiction of one of the many individual acts of gallantry performed on 23 August 1914 – that of Lance Corporal Charles Jarvis. Jarvis is seen here attempting to blow up a bridge at Jemappes, just outside Mons, an action for which he was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross. The original caption states: "In the present war the Royal Engineers have nobly lived (and died) up to their great traditions, and several of their number have already won the VC by daring deeds, one of which is here illustrated. Lance-Corporal Jarvis ... worked for three and a half hours under a most deadly fire in full view of the enemy, and eventually was successful in laying a fire charge for the demolition of a bridge." (HMP)

THE FIRST VCs

23 AUGUST 1914

UNDER THE command of Lieutenant Maurice Dease a section of two machine-guns in a forward company of the 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers was detailed to hold the railway bridge over the Mons-Condé canal at Nimy, less than two miles to the north of Mons city centre. It would seem that Dease's company, under Captain Ashburner, was placed on the bridge itself, whilst the remainder of the battalion occupied the ground immediately to the south. The Royal Fusiliers were also expected to defend the nearby road bridge. To the north-east of Mons was another bridge over the canal at Obourg. This was held by the 4th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment.

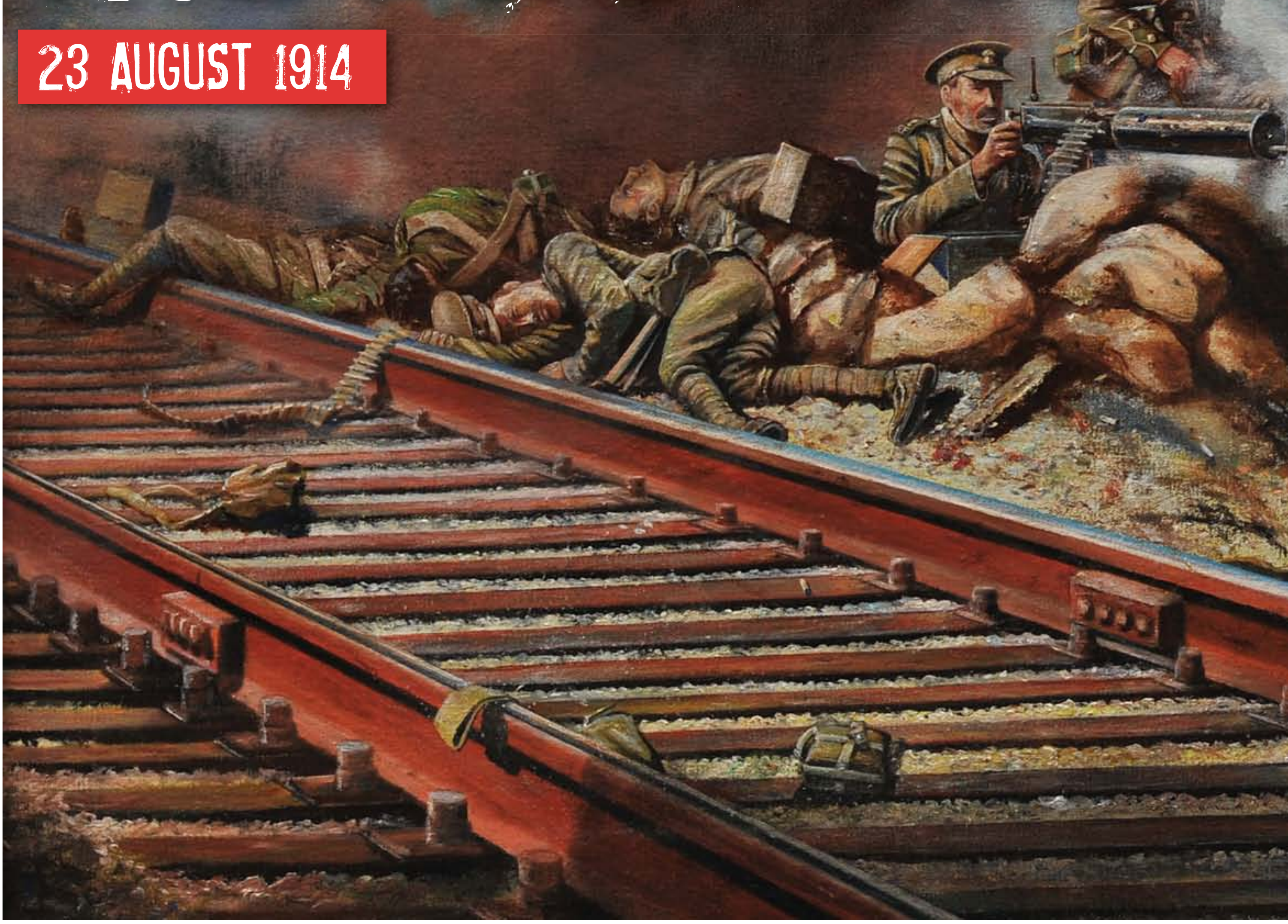
The comparatively small British Expeditionary Force, regarded by the Kaiser as a "contemptible little army", was overwhelmingly outnumbered by the opposing German 1st Army. Equally, the positions which the British soldiers occupied were far from strong with the bend in the canal where the two Nimy bridges lay forming part of a wide, exposed salient. It was unlikely that the British troops would be able to stop the German advance at the canal, so plans were made to evacuate Mons if the canal position became untenable and take up a second defensive position amongst the slag heaps and the mining villages to the south of the city. Everything, then, depended upon the men of the Royal Fusiliers and the 4th Middlesex halting the first German onslaught.

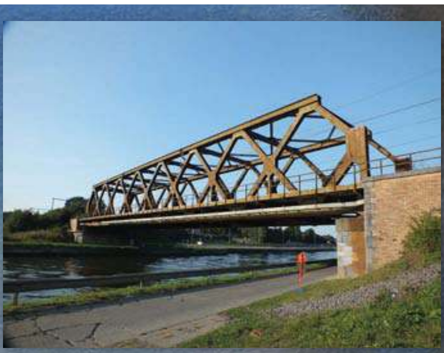


ABOVE: Private Sidney Frank Godley. Godley received the VC from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 15 February 1919. In the years after the war he worked as a school caretaker in Tower Hamlets, London.

It was on Sunday, 23 August 1914, that the Germans attacked. The day began with mist and rain shrouding the battlefield. This cleared by 10.00 hours but by then German artillery was in position on high ground to the north of the canal; the British positions at Nimy and Obourg soon came under heavy fire.

The bombardment was followed by direct infantry assaults upon the Nimy bridges by the





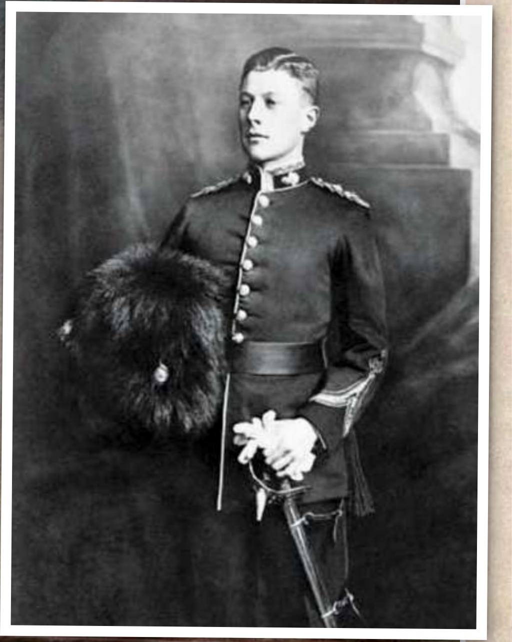
ABOVE: **This bridge at Nimy is a modern replacement for the one on which Lieutenant Maurice Dease and Private Sidney Godley made their stand on 23 August 1914.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **This personal memorial to Lieutenant Maurice Dease was photographed on the railway bridge at Nimy. Dease's grave can be seen in St. Symphorien Military Cemetery.** (HMP)

THE VICTORIA CROSS

AWARDED FOR "most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy", the Victoria Cross was instituted in January 1856 following the events of the Crimean War.

The premier award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross remains the only Level One award in the hierarchy of British gallantry and bravery awards for active operations in presence of the enemy. The awards to Dease and Godley were the first of 628 VCs awarded to 627 recipients during the First World War.



ABOVE: **Lieutenant Maurice Dease. Dease is recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as being "one of the first British officer battle casualties of the war and the first posthumous recipient of the VC of the war".**

German 84th Infantry Regiment. The following is recorded in the official history of the war: "The Royal Fusiliers were ceaselessly shooting down Germans, who at first came on in heavy masses, but, being caught by the rapid fire of the Fusiliers in front and by machine guns of the Middlesex and Royal Irish in flank, soon abandoned this costly method of attack."

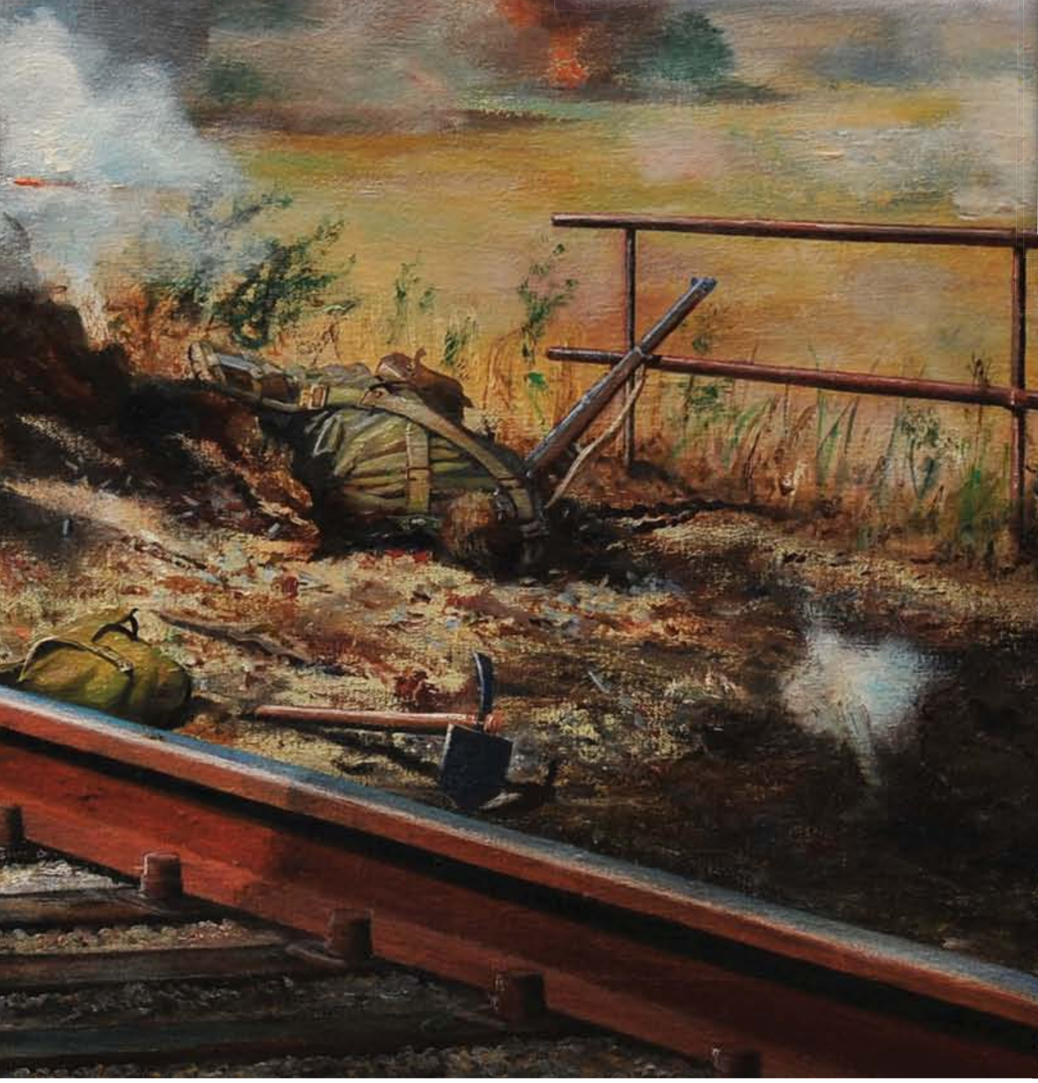
However, as more German troops were thrown into the attack, the situation of the Royal Fusiliers became "perilous in the extreme" and the pressure upon them became too great for the men to bear. Yet to withdraw whilst still in contact with the enemy would expose them to the fire of the German troops. It was vital that Dease's machine-guns held back the Germans long enough for the rest of the men to pull out.

By this time, however, all the men of Dease's two sections on the railway bridge had either been killed or wounded. So the young Lieutenant took over a gun himself. Assisted by Private Sidney Godley, Dease kept the Germans at bay, despite being wounded at least three times. Eventually, unable to continue, Dease was taken to the dressing station where he died from his wounds.

Godley, himself wounded by shrapnel or shell fragments and with a bullet lodged in his skull, took over the gun. Continuing to hold his position for two hours, Godley single-handedly held off the Germans long enough for the rest of the battalion to conduct a successful withdrawal.

For their actions that day, both Dease and Godley were subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross, the first of the war. The announcements were published in *The London Gazette* of Wednesday, 25 November 1914.

Though it was initially thought that Godley had been killed, he was in fact taken prisoner. He was held for much of his captivity in a camp at Delotz near Dallgow-Döberitz to the west of Berlin. It was whilst in the PoW camp that Dease was informed by the Germans of the award. ●



MAIN PICTURE: **This painting, by the renowned military artist David Rowlands, was commissioned by the 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. It depicts Private Sidney Godley's and Lieutenant Maurice Dease's gallant stand at Nimy on 23 August 1914.** (COURTESY OF DAVID ROWLANDS; **WWW.DAVIDROWLANDS.CO.UK**)

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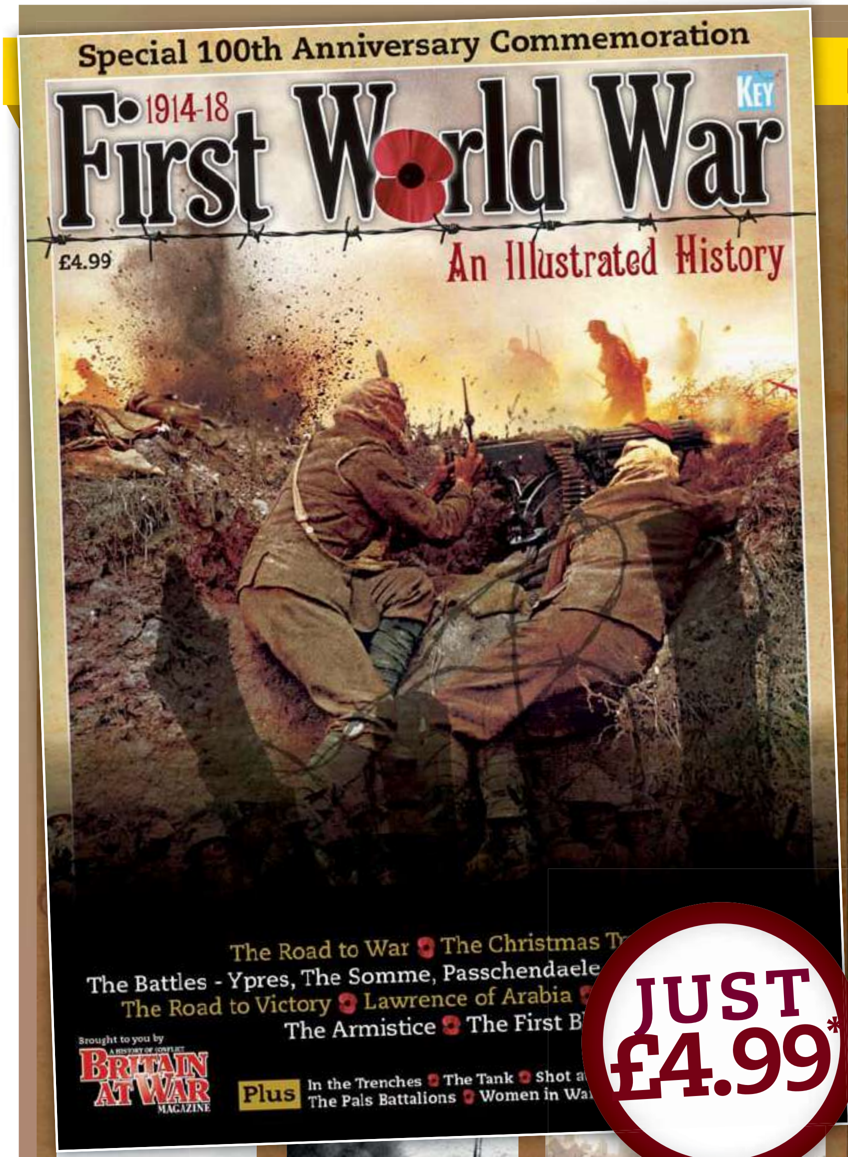
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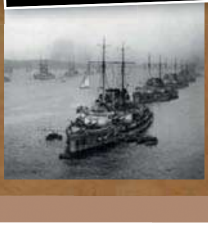

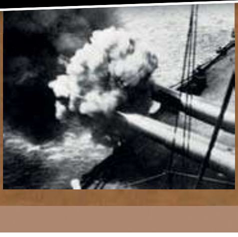

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351/14

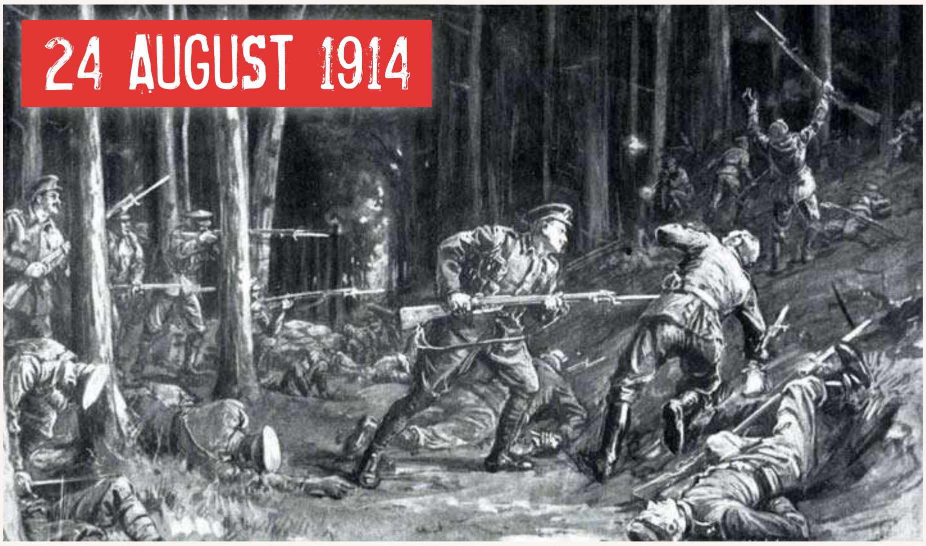
THE RETREAT FROM MONS

24 AUGUST 1914

LIEUTENANT SPEARS, Sir John French's liaison officer with the French Fifth Army, had arrived at the British Expeditionary Force GHQ at around 23.00 hours on the night of 23 August with the news that General Lanrezac intended to withdraw his Fifth Army on the 24th. Spears was sent back to the Fifth Army to inform Lanrezac that the BEF, therefore, had no choice but to follow suit and also pull back.

Sir John French called the staff officers of his two corps together at 01.00 hours to discuss the arrangements for a retreat. It was decided to withdraw some eight miles to the south to occupy an east-west line running from the village of La Longueville to the hamlet of La Boiseserrette. French warned his officers not to allow themselves to be drawn into the border fortress of Maubeuge, around five miles east of La Longueville, as they would then find themselves trapped.

The retreat of the BEF from Mons began on the morning of 24 August with II Corps moving off at 04.00 hours, just after the Germans had begun a heavy artillery bombardment and just as the enemy was preparing to re-new their attack. I Corps followed suit at 05.20 hours.



ABOVE: During 23 and 24 August 1914, the men of 'D' Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) were tasked with holding a wood near the Belgian village of Wasmes. On the afternoon of the 24th, notes the original caption to this drawing, "their numbers were so reduced that further retirement was imperative, but the movement could not be carried out as a German force had crept up on the flank through the wood. A charge was necessary to clear this force out, and as his officer had previously been killed, Sergeant Spence took command of his platoon and led a forlorn hope. The very unexpectedness of the onslaught ensured its success." The Germans broke and abandoned their positions, and the remnant of the West Ridings retired in safety. For this, and his subsequent actions, 33-year-old William Spence was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, though he would never learn of this fact, being killed in action a few days later on 3 September 1914. (HMP)

ABOVE: During the retreat from Mons, the infantry had about four hours' rest in every twenty-four hour period. This photograph shows one "Lieutenant Arkwright ... making a hasty toilet" at the end of the retreat. (HMP)

ABOVE: Men of the 1st Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) pictured resting at a farm during the retreat from Mons, 24 August 1914. On the left of the image can be seen Major C.B. Vandeleur – according to the original caption he is observing the approaching enemy through the binoculars – whilst to his right is Colonel Robertson. (HMP)

The Germans were completely deceived and did not realise that the British had gone. In the words of one German officer, the BEF had "vanished without leaving a trace".

The only part of the BEF that found itself under pressure from the Germans during the retreat was II Corps, which comprised the 3rd and 5th divisions. Whilst the former's 8th Brigade moved off unmolested, the other two brigades of the 3rd Division came under heavy attack as soon as they began to withdraw. The 1st Battalion the Lincolnshire Regiment which formed the 9th Brigade's rearguard, helped by the 109th Battery Royal Field Artillery, took a heavy toll on the massed ranks of the advancing enemy infantry.

The heaviest fighting took place to the west and fell upon the 5th Division commanded by Major-General Sir Charles Fergusson. This had been posted on the left of the British line – exactly where the German 1st Army's commander, von Kluck, intended to turn the Allied flank. So, as the 5th Division began to retreat it found itself being harassed by no less than three enemy divisions.

Just as during the Battle of Mons on the 23rd, the advancing German infantry was stopped in its tracks by the rapid rifle fire of what the Kaiser had called "a contemptible little army". In the lull that followed, the 5th Division was able to withdraw to follow the rest of the BEF in its retreat southwards towards Le Cateau. What also came to be known as "The Great Retreat", which lasted for thirteen days, was underway. ●

ONE OF the most difficult, and dangerous, of military manoeuvres is that of disengaging from the enemy and withdrawing. That the BEF was able to extract itself from Mons with General von Kluck's 1st Army pressing hard upon it is a testament to the professional ability of the troops. As one German officer remarked, "Up to all the tricks of the trade from their experience of small wars, the English veterans brilliantly understood how to slip off at the last moment."

It was against this backdrop that the BEF continued its retreat throughout 24 August 1914. It was just before midday when the German IV Corps suddenly attacked of the British 5th Division, the latter immediately summoning assistance from the Cavalry Division.

As soon as the Germans attacked, the 5th Division's Commanding Officer formed a rear guard consisting of the 1st Battalion, Norfolk Regiment and the 1st Battalion, Cheshire Regiment supported by the guns of the 119th Battery Royal Field Artillery. The men had no time to dig in near the village of Élouges, but found natural cover along some high ground.

Shortly after the infantry had established their line, the 2nd Cavalry Brigade – 4th Dragoon Guards, 9th Lancers and 18th Hussars – appeared on the scene. The 18th Hussars placed itself in Élouges and the 9th Lancers took up position with 'L' Battery Royal Horse Artillery to the west of the village. The 4th Dragoon Guards remained to the south of Élouges.

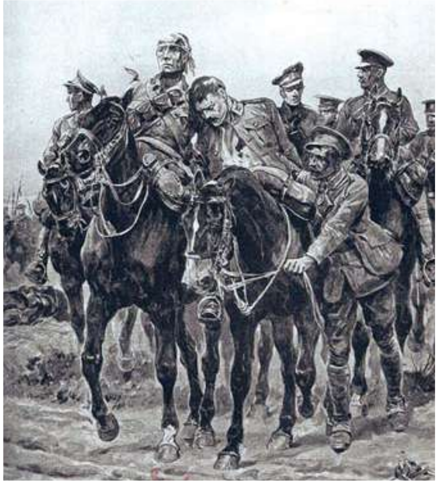
What happened next has never been properly explained, but it appears that elements of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade came under fierce artillery fire which provoked them to charge the German guns. The German infantry, seeing the British cavalry bearing down upon their artillery, also opened fire.

ABOVE: The 9th Lancers pictured arriving at Mons on 21 August 1914, three days before they went into action at Élouges. (HMP)

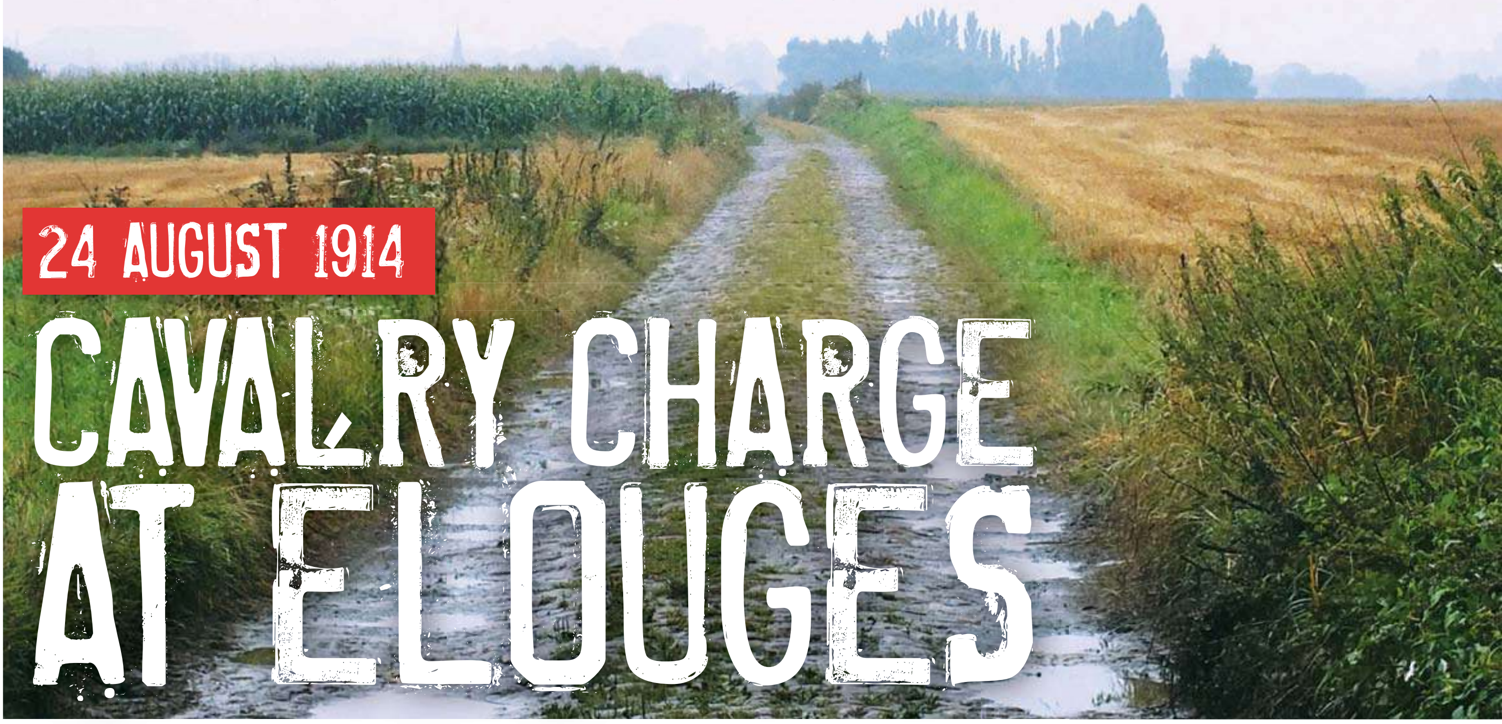
From nothing, a major engagement had begun. "Every rifle and machine-gun on their side was now blazing away at our desperate and rather objectless cavalrymen," recalled one officer. Just a few moments earlier the cavalry had been trotting up to support the infantry and then, without apparent cause or instruction, an entire brigade was charging headlong in to the massed German artillery."

It was an uneven contest, and the British cavalry was severely mauled by the enemy, with the 2nd Brigade suffering more than 200 casualties in a few minutes. "At 10a.m. the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, sixteen or seventeen hundred officers and men, Dragoons, Lancers and Hussars, had been practically intact," noted one witness, "yet before noon it was so broken and scattered as to be for the time being non-existent."

The charge did little to help the infantry; the Norfolks and the Cheshires still had to try and hold back the German troops. Despite this, the cavalry charge at Élouges has been likened to the Charge of the Light Brigade. As was the case at Balaklava, a misinterpreted order led to a valiant, if misguided, attempt to capture the enemy's guns. Despite the gallantry shown that day, this cavalry action has become little more than a footnote in history. ●


ABOVE: A contemporary drawing of British cavalry after a charge – such scenes would almost certainly have been witnessed after the fighting at Élouges on 24 August 1914. (HMP)

BELOW: The location of the cavalry charge as it appears today. This is the view looking south down the Chaussée Brunehaut near Élouges towards the crossroads from where the 9th Lancers and 4th Dragoons began their charge. Galloping towards the photographer, the 4th Dragoons were on the right side of the road, the 9th Lancers to the left. By the time the cavalry reached the area of the photographer a devastating fire was poured down on them by the men of the German 93rd Infantry Regiment (behind the cameraman to the right) and the 72nd Infantry Regiment (likewise, but to the left), both of which were supported by artillery; both British units turned to their right, heading away out to the left of this view. (HMP)

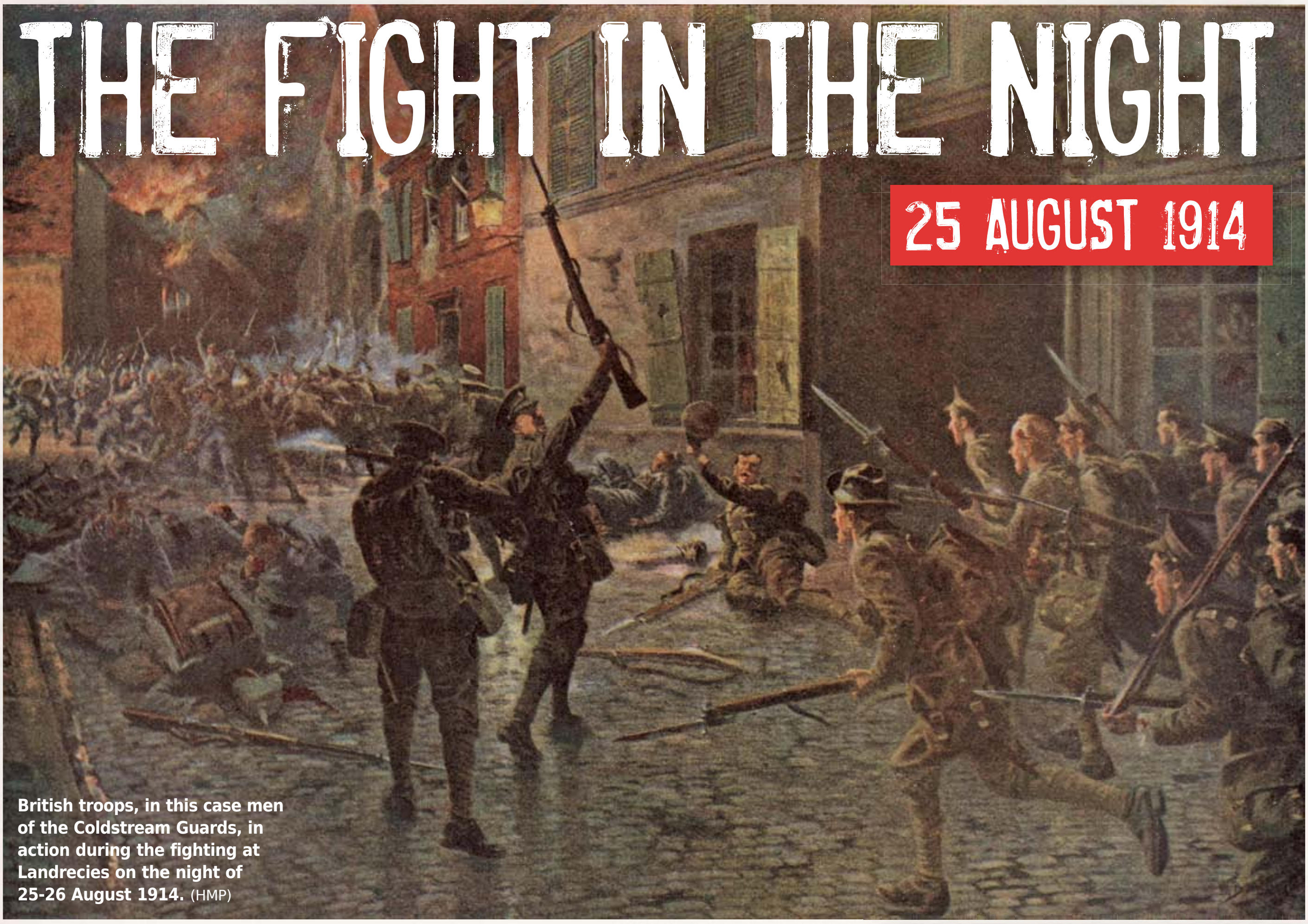


24 AUGUST 1914

CAVALRY CHARGE AT ÉLOUGES

THE FIGHT IN THE NIGHT

25 AUGUST 1914



British troops, in this case men of the Coldstream Guards, in action during the fighting at Landrecies on the night of 25-26 August 1914. (HMP)

THE BEF's retreat continued on 25 August with I Corps, under General Haig, and General Smith-Dorrien's II Corps, falling back towards Le Cateau along different lines either side of the Forêt de Mormal. I Corps had an easier march than its sister corps and Haig's men reached the small town of *Landrecies*, about thirty miles south-south-east of Valenciennes, where they were told they would at last be able to halt and eat. However, they would not have time to rest long.

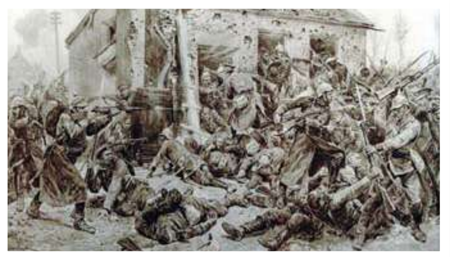
"I remember seeing the man who brought the message riding through the streets," recalled Captain Wolrige Gordon MC, of the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards. "A French *gendarme*, he galloped on shouting '*Les Allemands*! *Les Allemands*!' and never stopped even to answer questions."

The 3rd Coldstream Guards, which had taken up quarters in the French infantry barracks in the north of Landrecies, went forward immediately to the edge of the town. Landrecies is situated just to the south of the River Sambre and the Coldstreamers took up positions to defend both the bridge over the river and the nearby railway crossing.

"We hoped to settle down for the night in the French barracks, and were just in the act of making some tea when the alarm was given that the Germans were approaching the town," recalled Lance Corporal Frederick Hooper, 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards. "We tumbled out into the street, and some of us rushed out without our boots on ...

"Word was brought that the Germans, who, like us, were hoping to spend the night in the town, were breaking through the woods. We waited quietly until the Germans were within 50 yards of us, when we blazed away."

The Grenadiers were sent forward to help the Coldstreams who were heavily engaged close to some farm buildings. A this point some of the German troops set fire to a number of straw sacks in the farmyard.



A contemporary, highly stylised, drawing depicting British and German troops during the fighting at Landrecies. (HMP)

Peaceful today, this is the view looking north from the railway crossing at Landrecies in the direction from which the German troops approached. Heavily developed since the First World War, when most of the ground in this picture was farmland, it was in this area that the men of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards dug in, supported by the Grenadier Guards. It was also in this area that Lance Corporal Wyatt undertook the actions for which he would be awarded the Victoria Cross. (HMP)

In the darkness, the flames lit up the Coldstream Guards' positions, making the British troops easy targets. Lance Corporal George Harry Wyatt twice dashed out under very heavy fire – the Germans were only twenty-five yards away – and extinguished the burning straw. If the fires had not been put out, the Coldstream Guards would have been forced to evacuate the buildings and fall back into Landrecies. Thanks to Wyatt, the Guards were able to hold their ground all night. For his actions, Wyatt was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

The Guards Brigade held up the Germans until, at around 04.00 hours, they received orders to retire at daybreak. Thanks to the resilience of the Guards, I Corps was able to escape the clutches of the German First Army even though the retreat from Landrecies was far from rapid as the men were exhausted from fighting all night. ●

FIRST RFC VICTORY

25 AUGUST 1914

WITHIN DAYS of the pilots and aircraft of the Royal Flying Corps arriving in France, they went into action. The first aerial reconnaissance mission was carried out on Wednesday, 19 August 1914, by Captain P.B. Joubert de la Ferté of 3 Squadron, at the controls of a Blériot, and Lieutenant G.W. Mapplebeck, a 4 Squadron pilot flying a Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2.

The pair took off at 09.30 hours without observers. Captain Joubert de la Ferté had been instructed to reconnoitre the area of Nivelles-Genappe in order to report what Belgian forces were in that neighbourhood, whilst Lieutenant Mapplebeck was to find out whether enemy cavalry were still in force in the neighbourhood of Gembloux. The two pilots were to fly together as far as Nivelles, "so that if one was obliged to descend the other could report its whereabouts". Things quickly started to go wrong and both men lost their way and each other. After various landings and much searching, they eventually returned to base.

Three days later the RFC suffered the loss of its first aircraft over enemy territory. At 10.16 hours on the morning of 22 August 1914, Lieutenant Vincent Waterfall and Lieutenant Charles Bayly, the observer, had taken off from Mauberge in a 5 Squadron Avro 504.

ABOVE: **Another view of an Avro 504. Fairly sturdy and easy to fly, the Avro 504 was used by the Royal Naval Air Service to conduct bombing raids into German territory at the beginning of the First World War. The first aircraft to strafe troops on the ground, it was also the first British aircraft to be shot down by enemy ground fire. Better aircraft soon replaced the Avro 504 in combat, but it remained the standard British trainer for many years.** (COURTESY OF KEITH BROOKS)

They had been tasked to monitor the advance of the Germans, however they failed to return, and, with no news of their fate forthcoming, were reported missing the following day. Bayly's report, so far as he had written it, was picked up near the wreckage of the machine by some Belgian peasants, and eventually found its way to the War Office in London. It was subsequently established that at 10.50 hours that morning they had observed a line of horsemen, and, whilst flying over the column, they were shot down by ground fire. "The loss of this aeroplane," notes The Western Front Association, "was the RFC's first combat loss in the Great War".

It was after the start of the retreat from Mons on 24 August 1914, that the RFC began to come into its own, an increasing number of reconnaissance flights were flown, many of which resulted in helpful intelligence. It was in this period that the first German machine to be seen by the British appeared over the aerodrome at Maubeuge on 22 August.

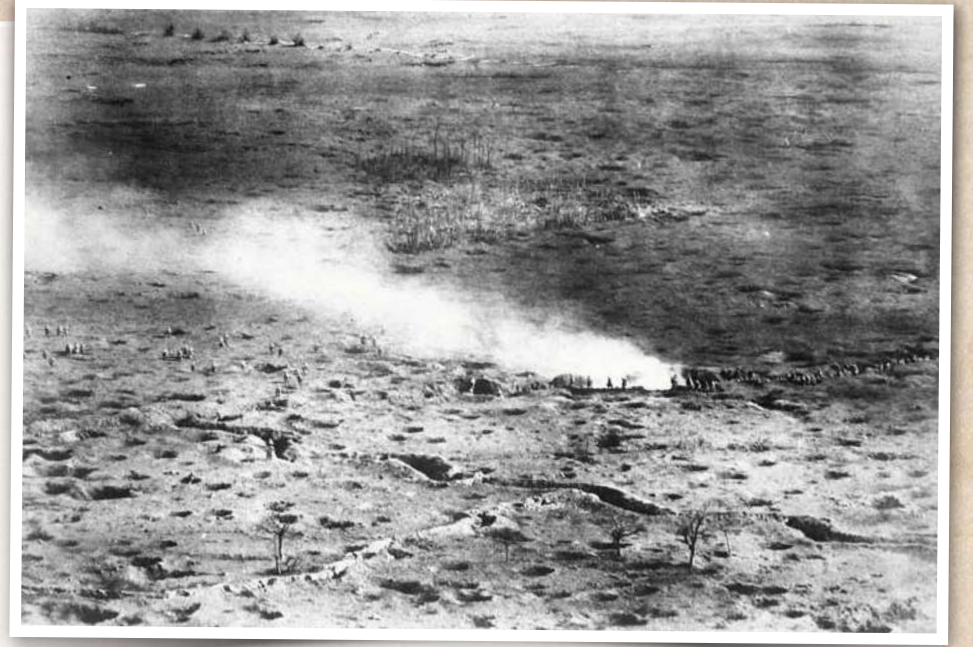
Major C.J. Burke described the event in his diary: "At about 2.25 p.m. an Albatross biplane passed over the town. Major Longcroft with Captain Dawes as passenger, Lieutenant

MAIN PICTURE BELOW: **A starboard rear view of an early Avro 504 – the aircraft flown by Lieutenant Vincent Waterfall and Lieutenant Charles Bayly – in RFC service. By the end of the First World War, some 8,970 Avro 504s had been manufactured, though production continued for almost twenty years.** (© THE TRUSTEES OF THE RAF MUSEUM, 2014)

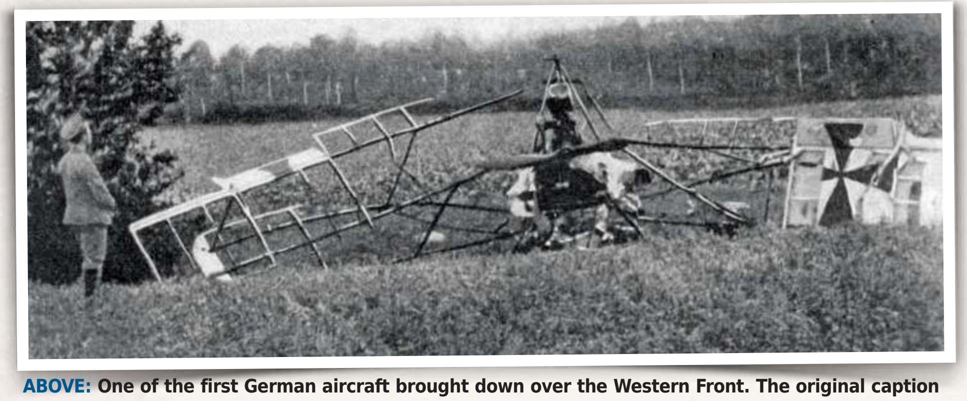
Dawes with Major Burke as passenger, in B.E.'s, gave chase. The gun machine piloted by Lieutenant Strange also went out. The machine (Albatross) had far too long a start, and got into a rain cloud."

The retreat also witnessed the beginnings of fighting in the air, though it was not until 25 August 1914, that an enemy machine was brought down by a British aeroplane. On this subject, the historian Walter Raleigh wrote the following after the war:

"Unfortunately during the retreat, combat reports were not made out, so that there is no account in the war diaries of the actual fighting. Some of the fights are mentioned. On the 25th of August three machines of No.2 Squadron chased an enemy monoplane. It was forced to land; Lieutenant H.D. Harvey-Kelly and Lieutenant W.H.C. Mansfield landed near it and continued the chase on foot, but the Germans escaped into a wood. When some trophies had been taken from the machine it was burnt.



ABOVE: **The use of aircraft for military purposes soon led to the development of other roles, one of the earliest of which was the gathering of aerial photographs – as evidenced by this image, taken at a low altitude, of French soldiers during an attack on the Somme front.** (HMP)

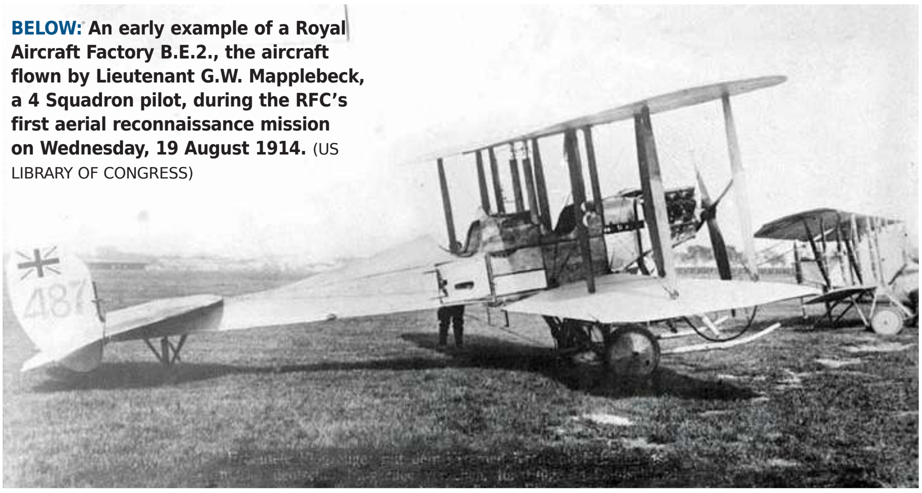


ABOVE: **One of the first German aircraft brought down over the Western Front. The original caption states that it was "brought down in flames between the Marne and Aisne on 11 September 1914". It also added that "a post-mortem on such a machine as this proved that Britain had at that time little to learn from Germany in aeronautical engineering".** (HMP)

"Another German machine was forced to descend on the same day near Le Quesnoy, where it was captured. Aeroplanes at this time had no special armament; officers carried revolvers and sometimes a carbine; but the confidence and determination with which they attacked did the work of a machine-gun, and brought the enemy down. In one instance, a little later on, a British pilot and observer, who were destitute of ammunition, succeeded by manoeuvring boldly above a German machine in bringing it to the ground and taking it captive."

During the retreat the dropping of bombs was still in an early experimental stage. There were some mildly successful exploits. About dusk on 1 September 1914, an unnamed RFC officer, flying over the woods north of Villers-Cotterets, noticed two columns of the enemy's cavalry converging at the angle of cross-roads. He dropped two bombs, which caused confusion and stampede. "There was no bomb-dropping equipment in use at this time," continued Walter Raleigh, "but small hand-grenades were carried in the pockets, and larger bombs were slung or tied about the person".

ABOVE: **Lieutenant Vincent Waterfall and Lieutenant Charles Bayly are both buried in Tournai Communal Cemetery Allied Extension. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records state that both men were "one of the first Royal Flying Corps casualties of the war".** (COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION)



BELOW: **An early example of a Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2., the aircraft flown by Lieutenant G.W. Mapplebeck, a 4 Squadron pilot, during the RFC's first aerial reconnaissance mission on Wednesday, 19 August 1914.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

"The extraordinary part about the retreat", recalled Captain (later Wing Commander) P. B. Joubert de la Ferté, "was the contrasts that one experienced from day to day; one night sleeping under a hedge in a thunder-storm; the next in a comfortable private house; the third in the most modern type of hotel with every luxury and convenience, the whole forming a picture the impression of which has lasted throughout the war ... One curious thing was, unless one was brought down or left behind near the firing line one never came up against the actual unpleasantnesses of war." ●

26 AUGUST 1914

THE BATTLE OF LE CATEAU

AS THE BEF continued to retreat throughout 24 August, I Corps and II Corps had lost contact with each other, being separated by the Forêt de Mormal. Late that evening General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's II Corps was instructed to move south-westwards the following day, the 25th, to take up a line between the town of Le Cateau and the village of Haucourt, a march of fifteen miles or more.

After little rest, at 03.00 hours II Corps began its march towards Le Cateau. As the men tramped dispiritedly on towards the town, the 7th Brigade, which formed the rearguard, was engaged in a constant running battle with the Germans who would not be shrugged off. It was tiredness and hunger, though, which was becoming II Corps' greatest enemy. This was made worse by an unavoidable delay caused by the French cavalry which crossed the path of II Corps.

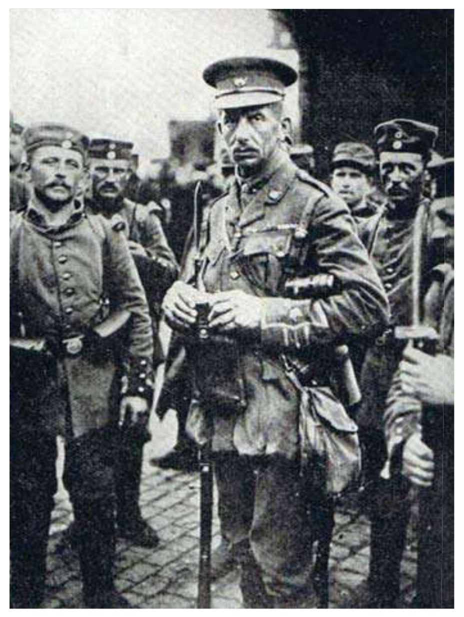
During the day, however, Smith-Dorrien received some good news. The 4th Division had arrived in France and had reached the Le Cateau area. It had taken up positions just south of the town, being ordered to cover the retirement of II Corps. The men finally reached Le Cateau during the evening; the retreat was taking its toll and most of the men were described as being "almost dead on their feet". Some units of the 3rd Division did not arrive at Le Cateau until after 02.00 hours on the 26th. When Smith-Dorrien received instructions to continue to retreat before daylight, he knew that the orders simply could not be followed. He sent a message to GHQ stating that his men were just too tired to march any further. Instead, he stated, he intended to stand and fight the enemy.

Sir John French gave a muddled reply which neither confirmed Smith-Dorrien's decision nor rejected it and this gave the II Corps commander the excuse to interpret the message as he saw fit. II Corps was going to fight.

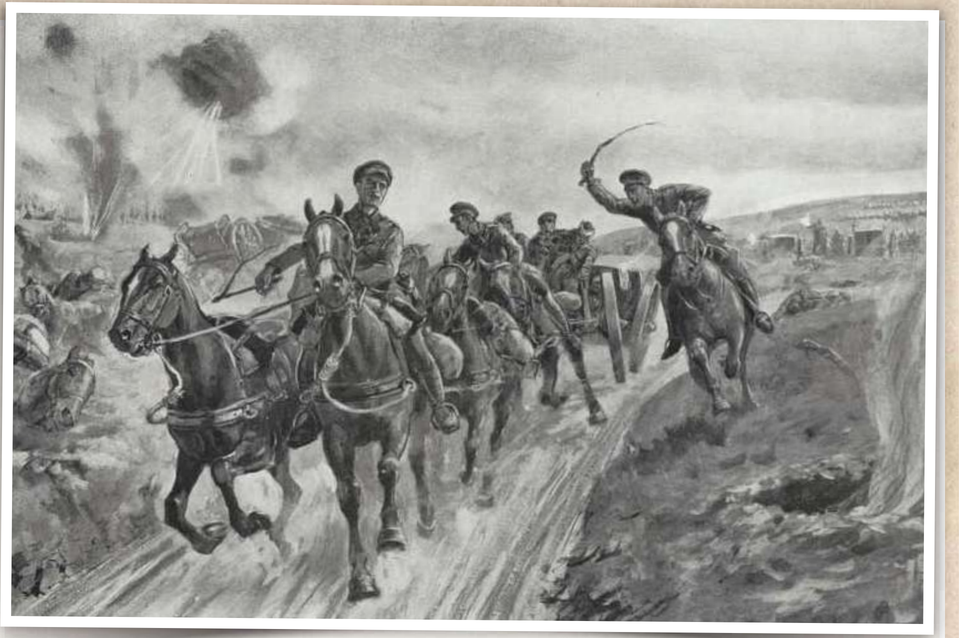
"Everyone was glad when that order was issued,"

MAIN PICTURE: Men of the 1st Cameronians are pictured resting during their march to reinforce the 4th Division on 25 August 1914, the day before their participation in the Battle of Le Cateau. (HMP)

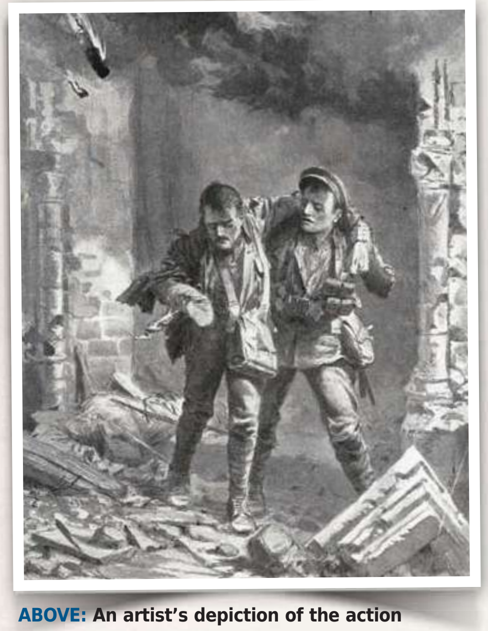
ABOVE: A conference of the battalion officers of the 1st Cameronians at Le Cateau, 26 August 1914. From left to right are: Captain and Adjutant J.C. Stormonth-Darling, Major F.A.C. Hamilton, Lieutenant Colonel P.R. Robertson, and Captain A.R. MacAllan. (HMP)



ABOVE: One of the 2,600 British troops captured at Le Cateau was Major Charles Yate, 2nd Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. The following extract from *The London Gazette* of 25 November 1914, describes Yate's involvement in the fighting at Le Cateau: "[He] commanded one of the two Companies that remained to the end in the trenches at Le Cateau on 26th August, and, when all other officers were killed or wounded and ammunition exhausted, led his nineteen survivors against the enemy in a charge in which he was severely wounded. He was picked up by the enemy and has subsequently died as a prisoner." (HMP)



ABOVE: Thirty-eight British artillery pieces were abandoned to the advancing German troops at Le Cateau, the majority of which had their breech blocks removed and sights disabled by their crews beforehand. The gun seen here, however, was one of those saved. Serving with the 37th Battery Royal Field Artillery, Captain Douglas Reynolds, "perceiving that the horses attached to several guns had all been killed or disabled, brought up two teams, driven by men who had volunteered their services, in a desperate attempt to save a couple of them. Though exposed to very heavy shell and rifle-fire – the advancing German infantry were scarcely a hundred yards distant – these brave men contrived to limber up two guns. But the next moment one entire team was shot down, while Driver Gobley, the driver of the centre pair of the other team, fell dead from his saddle. Captain Reynolds, however, rode alongside the unguided pair, and kept them in hand, and, with Driver [Frederick] Luke driving the leaders and Driver [Job] Drain the wheelers, the gun was brought safely out of action." Reynolds, Luke and Drain were all awarded the Victoria Cross. (HMP)



ABOVE: An artist's depiction of the action for which Private Albert Edward Walker, 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal during the Battle of Le Cateau. On 26 August 1914, the 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment was holding the village of Audencourt. Heavily shelled, the British troops suffered a number of wounded who were taken into the village church, which was used as an aid post. The German shells, however, set fire to the building, and Walker volunteered to move the wounded and fetch them water. For two hours he continued to perform this heroic work while the enemy kept up a fierce bombardment, frequently hitting the church. Subsequently promoted to Lance-Corporal, Walker was awarded the DCM "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty". He was killed in action on 10 May 1915. (HMP)

wrote Frank Richards of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers when the men were told to take off their packs and greatcoats and prepare for action.

With all thoughts of withdrawal put aside by the British troops, they manned a defensive line on the high ground to the south-east of Le Cateau. There was some confusion taking up these positions as a number of regiments did not receive their orders until well into the morning – soon after which the troops of General von Kluck's 1st Army attacked.

"Every gun was firing, and countless flashes of light scintillated against the gold and green sweep of country," noted Lieutenant Cecil Brownslow, who was with a Brigade Ammunition Column of the Royal Field Artillery, when describing the opening shots of the battle. "The whole scene was flecked with the white and yellow smoke clouds of enemy shrapnel and high explosive, the nearer of which appeared tongued with cruel yellow flames. I could see the bursting shell smashing and crumpling the villages, sweeping batteries with a hail of death and searching the valleys and hidden approaches."

The battle hung in the balance for most of the day, but II Corps held its ground until late in the afternoon. A little after 17.00 hours, Smith-Dorrien's men began to disengage with surprisingly little interference from the enemy who had been given "a bloody nose".

In order to take full advantage of the check which had inflicted upon the enemy, Smith-Dorrien's men needed to put as much distance between them and the Germans as they could. Marching through the evening, after a brief rest, the British troops continued their withdrawal at first light. They left behind 7,812 men that had been killed, wounded or captured, as well as other stragglers who would eventually catch up with their regiments. Exactly how many Germans had been lost is not known, but they had received a severe shock. The British were clearly not a beaten force.

The Official History gave this verdict on the Battle of Le Cateau: "Smith-Dorrien's troops had done what GHQ feared was impossible. With both flanks more or less in the air, they had turned upon an enemy of at least twice their strength; had struck him hard, and had withdrawn ... The men after their magnificent rifle-shooting looked upon themselves as victors; some even indeed doubted whether they had been in a serious action. Yet they had inflicted upon the enemy casualties never revealed, which are believed to have been out of all proportion to their own; and they had completely foiled the plan of the German commander." The stand at Le Cateau achieved one important objective in that it allowed the BEF to continue the retreat from Mons virtually unmolested for a further five days. ●

OTHER EVENTS ON 26 AUGUST 1914

- Austria declared war on Japan.
- The Battle of Tannenberg began. Lasting for five days, this engagement resulted in a decisive victory for the Germans over the Russian Army.

GERMAN CODES CAPTURED

26 AUGUST 1914

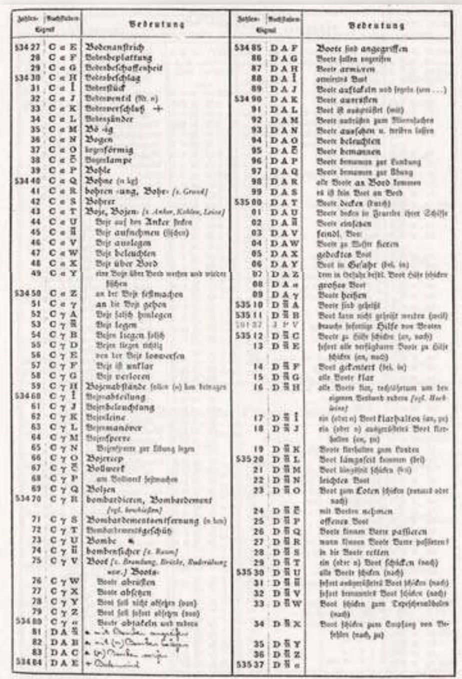
IT HAD already been decided that in the event of war with Germany, its submarine cables should be destroyed. Consequently, in August 1914 Germany's trans-Atlantic cables, and those running between Britain and Germany, were cut. Immediately there was an increase in messages sent via cables belonging to other countries and messages sent by wireless.

The latter could be intercepted by the Royal Navy's wireless stations, by individuals with access to wireless equipment, as well as installations belonging to the Post Office and Marconi. Interception, though, was no use without the means of decoding and interpretation, and Britain did not yet have an established organisation for doing this.

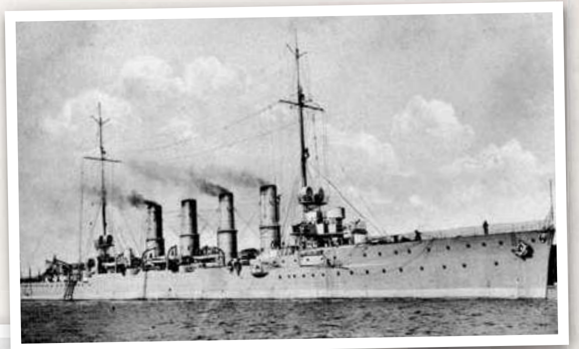
Steps were immediately taken to rectify this situation and, early in August 1914, the Admiralty created a deciphering department that eventually became known by the name Room 40; its first director was Rear Admiral Henry Oliver. However, little successful deciphering took place in the first few weeks of the war.

The first big breakthrough for Room 40 came with the capture of the *Signalbuch der Kaiserlichen Marine* (SKM), or signal codebook, from the German light cruiser SMS *Magdeburg*. *Magdeburg* had been carrying out a mine-laying operation in the Baltic when she ran aground on the island of Odensholm off the coast of Russian controlled Estonia on 26 August 1914. As attempts were made to refloat *Magdeburg*, a pair of Russian cruisers arrived on the scene and engaged the German warship. The German crew destroyed the forward section of their ship, but could not complete its destruction before the Russians reached and boarded her.

In their subsequent search of *Magdeburg*, the Russians located three Imperial German Navy codebooks along with a current encryption key. Whilst German accounts generally state that most of the light cruiser's secret papers were thrown overboard, these three copies were reportedly found in the charthouse. It was a discovery that would have wide-reaching implications.



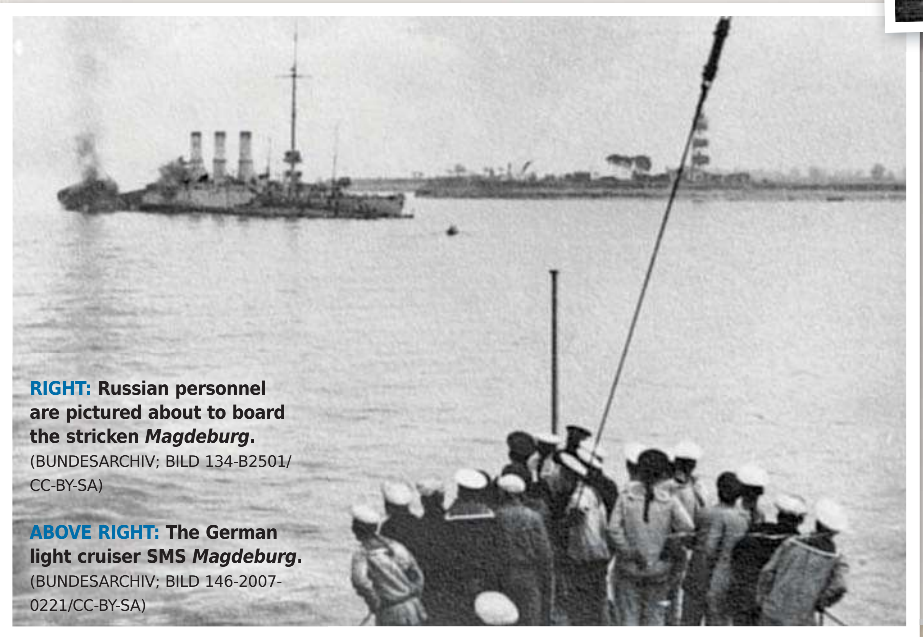
ABOVE: **A sample page from a captured *Signalbuch der Kaiserlichen Marine* or signal codebook such as that recovered from the wreck of *Magdeburg*.**



In the aftermath of the search of *Magdeburg*, the Russians offered copies of the codebooks to the British. One of the actual books, copy No.151, was also handed over; this was the codebook used for the majority of German naval signals (a second code was used for communications between warships and merchant ships, and a third code was used by flag officers).

Following the Russian offer, the *Edgar*-class protected cruiser HMS *Theseus* was despatched from Scapa Flow to Alexandrovosk in order to collect them. Although *Theseus* arrived on 7 September 1914, she did not depart until 30 September, returning to Scapa with the documents on 10 October 1914. The books were formally handed over to the First Lord, Winston Churchill, on 13 October 1914.

Once the cypher and code were known, a "pianola", or punched card machine, was used to decode messages and British Naval Intelligence was soon reading German signals. As the German navy was a heavy user of radio, this gave the British a great advantage. ●



RIGHT: **Russian personnel are pictured about to board the stricken *Magdeburg*.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 134-B2501/ CC-BY-SA)

ABOVE RIGHT: **The German light cruiser SMS *Magdeburg*.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 146-2007-0221/CC-BY-SA)

TOGOLAND THE FIRST TO FALL

26 AUGUST 1914

WHEN WAR was declared the German West African colony of Togoland was defended only by a small paramilitary force. The Allies took advantage of this by invading Togoland from the adjacent British Gold Coast and French Dahomey.

The only places of strategic significance to the Allies were the capital city, Lomé, and the wireless station at Kamina. The wireless station had only been completed in June and was of considerable importance in providing a communications link between Germany, its colonies and its fleet.

An appeal for Togoland to remain neutral by the German Governor, Major von Döring, was rejected, being viewed as an enemy ploy to keep the Kamina wireless station operating. On 7 August British and French forces crossed their respective borders into the German colony. A British force of around 600 men of the Gold Coast Regiment seized Lomé, without encountering any resistance, on 12 August. Döring retreated towards Kamina, collecting what reservists and local troops he could raise, determined to fight and resist for as long as possible.

During the operation to take control of Lomé there was one notable incident. Near a factory at Nuatia to the north of the capital, a British patrol encountered one of the *Polizeitruppe* who opened fire on them. A member of the Gold Coast Regiment, a Ghanaian scout by the name of Alhaji Grunshi, returned fire. He is believed to be the first British soldier to fire a shot during combat in the First World War, more than a week before the first shots were fired by the BEF outside Mons.

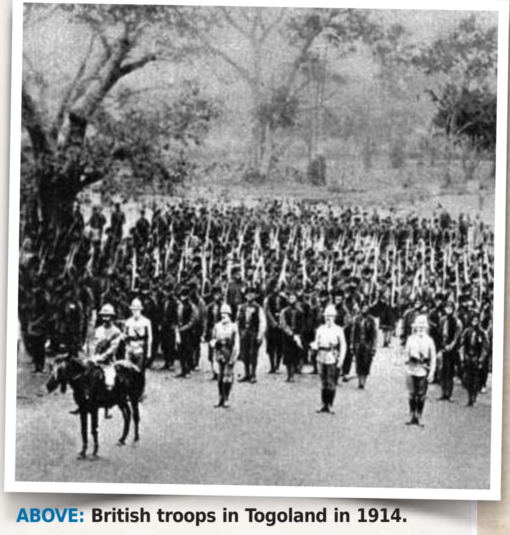
Lieutenant Colonel Bryant was placed in command of all Allied forces engaged in the subjugation of Togoland. He led the advance northwards. At the Battle of Bafilo and the Battle of Agbeluvhoe, German forces attempted to delay the advancing Allied troops but eventually Bryant's force reached the River Chra, the last major obstacle before Kamina. There, von Döring was determined to make a stand.

Both the road and railway bridges over the River Chra had been blown and forty European and 400 Togolese soldiers had dug strong entrenchments surrounding the village of Chra.

The British assault upon Chra began on 22 August, but the dense bush made movement difficult and heavy fire from the defenders drove the attackers back. Later in the day, it was thought that a weak spot had been discovered in the German defences and another assault was delivered. By this time further reinforcements had reached Chra by train from Kamina and this second attack also failed.

The Battle of Chra was the hardest fought action of the campaign, with the Allies having twenty-three men killed and fifty-two wounded. Total losses amounted to approximately 17% of Bryant's column. Amongst the dead was Lieutenant George Masterman Thompson, the first British officer to be killed in action during the war.

During the night the Germans abandoned Chra and retreated to Kamina as many of the local soldiers had deserted earlier when ordered to counter-attack the Allies. Major von Döring knew that the game was up and on 24 August he ordered the wireless station to be destroyed to prevent it falling into enemy hands. Two days later Bryant's force reached Kamina and accepted the surrender of von Döring and just 200 of his men. ●



ABOVE: British troops in Togoland in 1914.

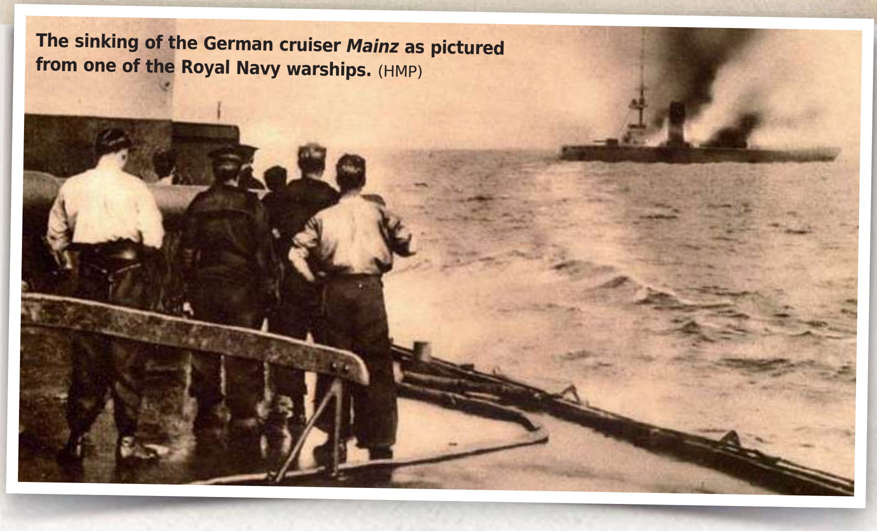
MAIN PICTURE: British colonial troops examining captured German machine-guns in 1914 - possibly the very weapons that Major von Döring's men used to such devastating effect during their defence of Chra. (WW1IMAGES)

28 AUGUST 1914

THE BATTLE OF HELIGOLAND BIGHT

IT WAS described as "a reconnaissance in force" with the object of attacking the enemy's light cruisers and destroyers; it was in fact a full-scale battle, the first of the Great War. It came about because Commodore Roger Keyes, who commanded the Eighth Submarine Flotilla watching the German ports in the North Sea, had noted that the Germans regularly patrolled the seas around their coast with destroyers. Each evening, the enemy destroyers, with a couple of escorting cruisers, would patrol along the coast to make sure there were no British vessels in the area. After patrolling all night, they would then return to port in the company of the waiting cruisers.

A plan was devised to draw the German destroyers away from the coast and then pounce on them with larger, more powerful Royal Navy warships that would be waiting over the horizon. The bait would be Keyes' submarines and the First and Third destroyer flotillas led by Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt.



The sinking of the German cruiser *Mainz* as pictured from one of the Royal Navy warships. (HMP)

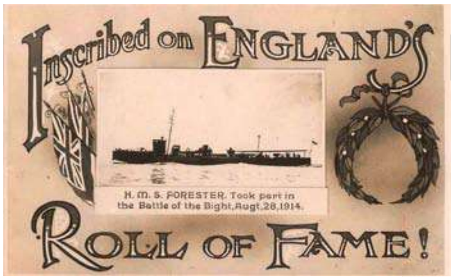
OTHER EVENTS ON 28 AUGUST 1914

- Malines was bombarded by the Germans
- The enlistment of the second 100,000-strong new British army began
- Lord Crewe announced that Indian troops were to participate in the war in Europe

At dawn on 28 August 1914, Tyrwhitt's flotillas, led by the light cruisers HMS *Arethusa* and HMS *Fearless* reached the pre-arranged rendezvous point near Heligoland Bight. Visibility was down to just three miles due to a light mist. Nevertheless, as expected, the British ships were spotted by one of the German destroyers. Tyrwhitt sent four of his destroyers to engage the German ship; the resulting gunfire alerted the other German destroyers which turned round to join in the battle.

"A confused, dispersed and prolonged series of combats ensued as opposing ships engaged each other," the First Lord of the Admiralty later wrote. "The German light cruisers already at sea joined in the action as did those close at hand. These were the SMS *Mainz* moored on the river Ems; *Strassburg*, *Cöln*, *Ariadne* and *Kolberg* in the River Jade; *Danzig* and *München* in the river Elbe."

Mainz, armed with twelve 10.5cm guns appeared out of the mist, steaming right across the path of the British destroyers. "The enemy opened a very hot fire, and as the range was only a little over 3,000 yards the little craft found themselves in the midst of flying shells," wrote one contemporary historian. "They altered course ten points to port, returning the German fire with interest, but receiving many wounds themselves, for the *Mainz* gunners got the range at once and took full advantage of it.

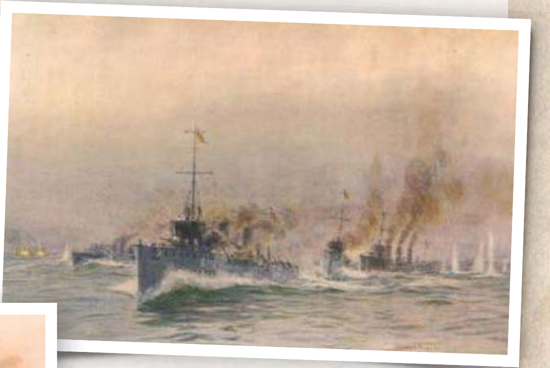

Inscribed on ENGLAND'S
ROLL OF FAME!
H.M.S. FORESTER. Took part in the Battle of the Bight, Augt.28,1914.

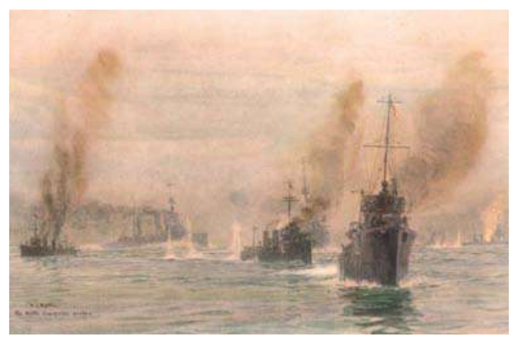
A propaganda postcard produced soon after the events of 28 August 1914 commemorating the involvement of one Royal Navy warship, HMS *Forester.* This Acheron-class destroyer was present as part of the First Destroyer Flotilla and shared in the prize money for the battle.

"HMS *Laurel* steamed away, a mass of smoke, her foremost funnel shattered, and the midship gun platform knocked to pieces. The gun itself remained mounted, but was a poor and solitary-looking object. *Liberty*'s commander was killed, her bridge damaged, and her mast shot away. *Laertes*, which stopped and fired a torpedo, was put out of action, her port boat being shattered and a hole knocked in her second funnel. The torpedo, however, hit *Mainz*, which soon began to show signs of the mauling she was receiving."

The German cruiser unfortunately found herself all but surrounded by *Arethusa* and *Fearless* and a number of their destroyers. For twenty-five minutes the action continued around *Mainz*; the issue being settled with the appearance of the Light Cruiser squadron. *Mainz*, according to one witness, was "a total wreck; volumes of black smoke and flame were belching from below, and a red-hot glow radiated from her torn plating. She was down by the head, and it was evident that she would only float a very short time when Keyes ordered the commander of *Lurcher* to lay his vessel alongside her. The dead and wounded were lying in ghastly heaps."

The situation, in the poor visibility, still remained a highly dangerous one until Admiral Beatty's battlecruiser squadron hove into view: "There straight ahead of us in lovely procession, like elephants walking through a pack of ... dogs came *Lion*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, *Invincible* and *New Zealand*," recalled a sailor on one of the destroyers.

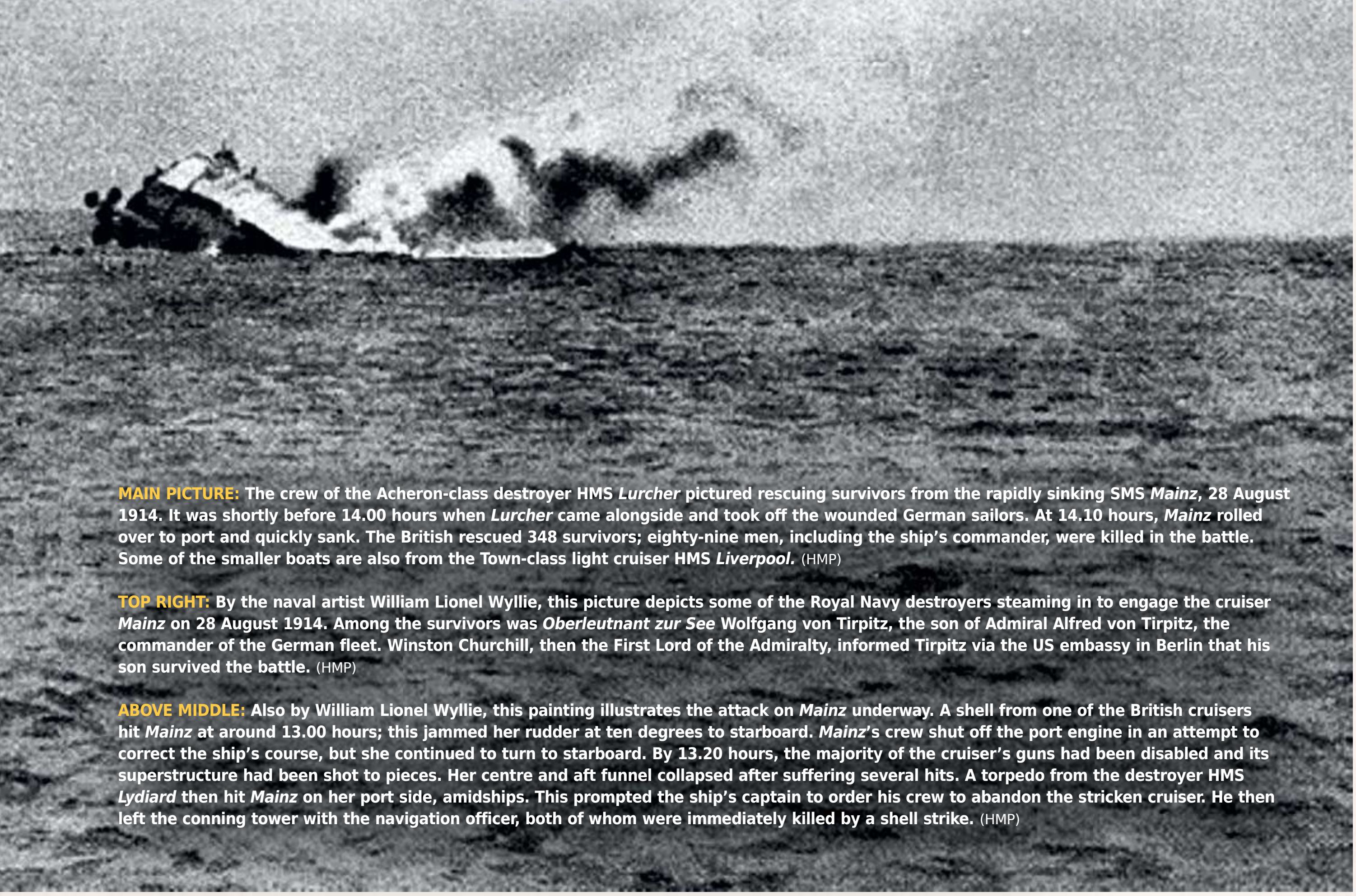




"How solid they looked, how utterly earthquaking. We pointed out our latest aggressor to them ... and we went west while they went east ... and just a little later we heard the thunder of their guns."

The result of the battle was now no longer in doubt. "Two enemy cruisers (the *Ariadne* and the *Köln*) were smashed to pieces by the enormous shells of the *Lion* and the *Princess Royal*; a third (the *Mainz*) was sunk by light cruisers and destroyers," a gleeful Winston Churchill was able to report. "Three others (the *Frauenlob*, *Strassburg* and the *Stettin*) limped home with many casualties. One German destroyer was sunk. The rest in the confusion and light mist escaped, though several were injured."

Not a single British ship was sunk, though one cruiser, HMS *Arethusa*, was badly damaged. According to Churchill, the result of the battle "far-exceeded the hopes of the Admiralty and produced results of a far-reaching character upon the whole of the naval war". ●



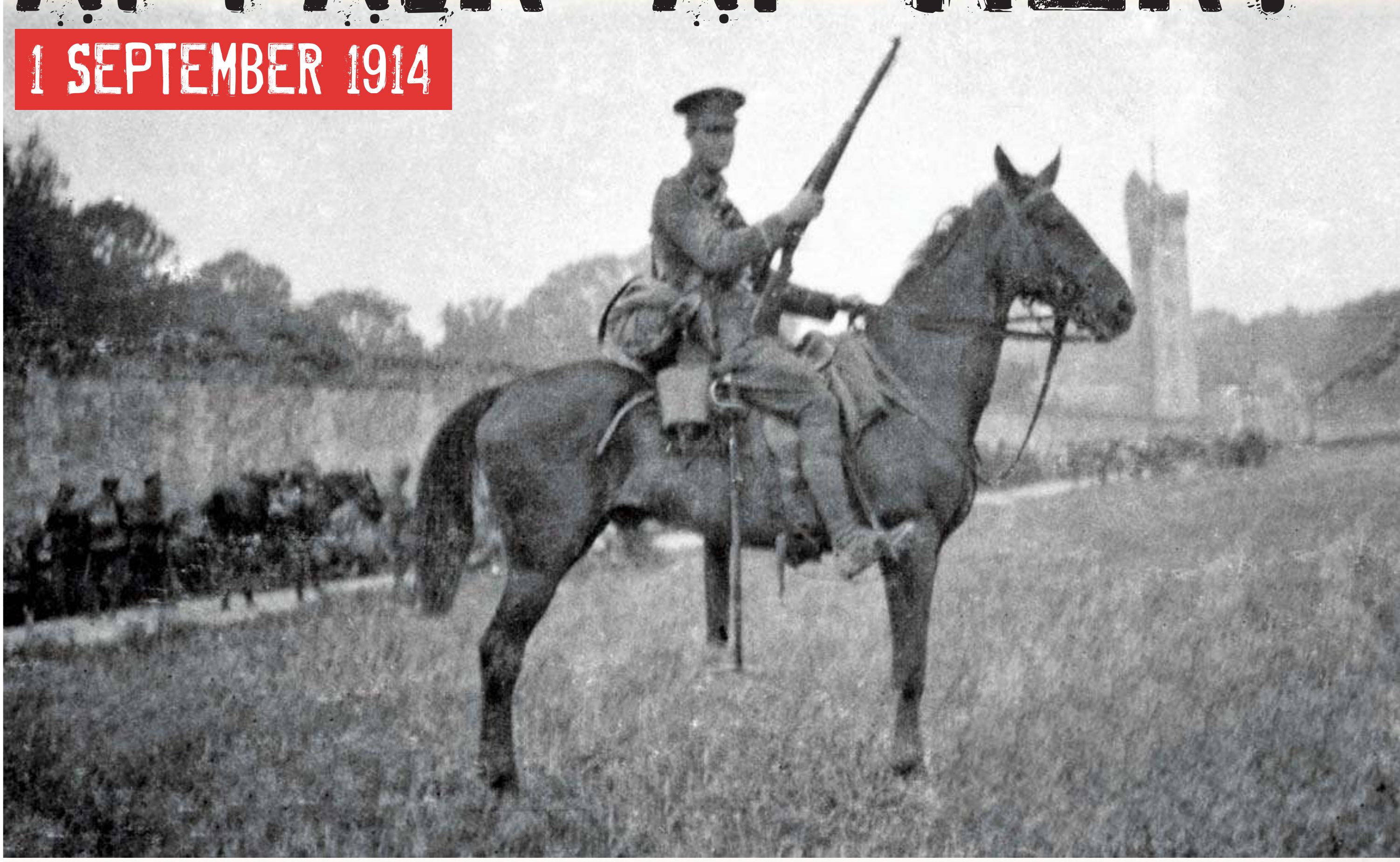
MAIN PICTURE: The crew of the Acheron-class destroyer HMS *Lurcher* pictured rescuing survivors from the rapidly sinking SMS *Mainz*, 28 August 1914. It was shortly before 14.00 hours when *Lurcher* came alongside and took off the wounded German sailors. At 14.10 hours, *Mainz* rolled over to port and quickly sank. The British rescued 348 survivors; eighty-nine men, including the ship's commander, were killed in the battle. Some of the smaller boats are also from the Town-class light cruiser HMS *Liverpool*. (HMP)

TOP RIGHT: By the naval artist William Lionel Wyllie, this picture depicts some of the Royal Navy destroyers steaming in to engage the cruiser *Mainz* on 28 August 1914. Among the survivors was *Oberleutnant zur See* Wolfgang von Tirpitz, the son of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the commander of the German fleet. Winston Churchill, then the First Lord of the Admiralty, informed Tirpitz via the US embassy in Berlin that his son survived the battle. (HMP)

ABOVE MIDDLE: Also by William Lionel Wyllie, this painting illustrates the attack on *Mainz* underway. A shell from one of the British cruisers hit *Mainz* at around 13.00 hours; this jammed her rudder at ten degrees to starboard. *Mainz*'s crew shut off the port engine in an attempt to correct the ship's course, but she continued to turn to starboard. By 13.20 hours, the majority of the cruiser's guns had been disabled and its superstructure had been shot to pieces. Her centre and aft funnel collapsed after suffering several hits. A torpedo from the destroyer HMS *Lydiard* then hit *Mainz* on her port side, amidships. This prompted the ship's captain to order his crew to abandon the stricken cruiser. He then left the conning tower with the navigation officer, both of whom were immediately killed by a shell strike. (HMP)

AFFAIR AT NÉRY

1 SEPTEMBER 1914



ABOVE: **A British cavalryman on a horse captured from an Uhlan regiment at Néry.** (IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM; Q51485)

IT SEEMED the retreat would never end and for the men of the 1st Cavalry Brigade it meant long days in the saddle. After a day patrolling along the bank of the River Oise on 31 August, Brigadier-General Charles Briggs' men were tired and needed to find billets for the night. Having been informed that there were no British troops in the village of Néry, it was to there that the 1st Cavalry Brigade headed. It was also where General Otto von Garnier's German 4th Cavalry division was aiming for, hoping to catch the British troops by surprise.

A heavy mist hugged the ground as day broke on 1 September. A five-man patrol from 'B' Company of the 11th Hussars, which had formed the advance guard the previous day, scouted the area for any sign of the enemy – and found it. The Germans had not seen the approaching Hussars but when one of Second Lieutenant George Tailby's men opened fire, all hell broke loose.

The opposing cavalry, both as surprised as each other at seeing the enemy, galloped away from each other. Tailby rode back into Néry to report on the situation. Before the British cavalry could prepare themselves, von Garnier's Field Artillery Regiment 3 opened fire on the village.

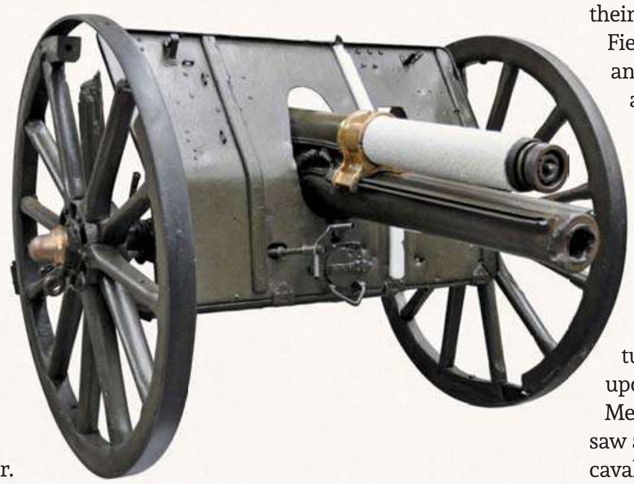
'L' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery tried to respond whilst Briggs, unaware that he was facing an entire division, deployed his men around the village. He had sent a motorcyclist to Divisional Headquarters and reinforcements, in the form of the 4th Cavalry Brigade and 'I' Battery RHA were already on their way.

Fierce resistance by the 11th Hussars, the 2nd and 5th Dragoon Guards kept the Germans at bay, who were short of ammunition having outstripped their supplies.

Fortunately also for Briggs' men, 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment, which was about a mile from Néry, heard gunfire from that direction and when a cavalry sergeant-major galloped up to declare that the 1st Cavalry Brigade was being 'scuppered', Major Frank Rowley, turned his battalion round and marched upon Néry.

Meanwhile, 'C' Squadron of the 11th Hussars, saw an opportunity to do what the British cavalry do – charge the enemy guns. "We

BELOW: **The VCs awarded to Captain Bradbury, Battery Sergeant Major Dorrell and Sergeant Nelson, along with the surviving QF 13 pounder Mk.1 gun which they used at Néry (seen here – note the damage), are all in the care of the Imperial War Museum. The battery itself was later awarded the Battle Honour "Néry", the only British Army unit to have this accolade.** (HMP)



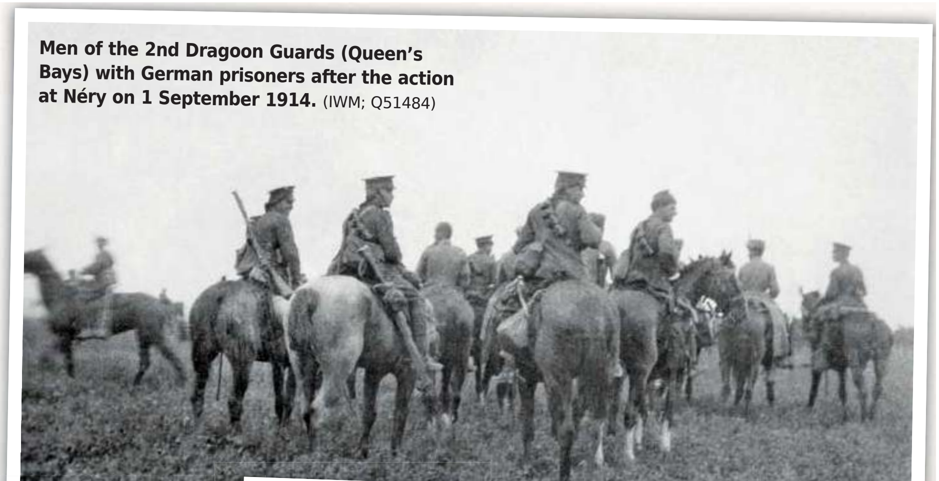
charged the German guns with a rousing cheer and drawn swords," recalled Lieutenant Guy Norrie, "and captured eight guns and two machine guns. This was a comparatively simple task as the machine-gun fire, particularly of the Bays [2nd Dragoon Guards] and I Battery had practically silenced the gun battery."1

Not wishing to be outdone, the 1st Middlesex also claimed to have captured these same guns: "With bayonets fixed and a cheer, the Middlesex men rushed across the small intervening valley and captured eight of the guns which had been firing on the 1st Cavalry Brigade and L Battery," wrote the regiment's historian. "With the exception of some 12 dead or badly wounded Germans, the gun crews had fled." The counter-attack by the infantry and cavalry drove the Germans back in disarray. Von Garnier's division was scattered around the countryside.

The Affair at Néry lasted for around three hours. The 1st Cavalry Brigade was heavily outnumbered at first but managed to defy the Germans until support arrived. The German 4th Cavalry Division lost in the region of 180 men (of which seventy-eight were taken prisoner) and 200 horses. Von Garnier escaped with three of his artillery pieces, but these were later found abandoned.

British casualties amounted to fifty-one killed and ninety-one wounded, though 390 horses were lost.

Once again, at Néry the British had demonstrated that they could beat the Germans. Von Garnier, however, had failed to reconnoitre and assess the situation before sending his men into the attack. If he had, he would have realised that he only had a brigade in his front which could have been surrounded and cut off. All that von Garnier achieved was to render his division incapable of further offensive action for a considerable period of time, just when the Germans needed their cavalry most of all. ●



Men of the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) with German prisoners after the action at Néry on 1 September 1914. (IWM; Q51484)

2nd-Lieut. G. T. DORRELL, V.C.
Capt. D. NELSON, V.C.

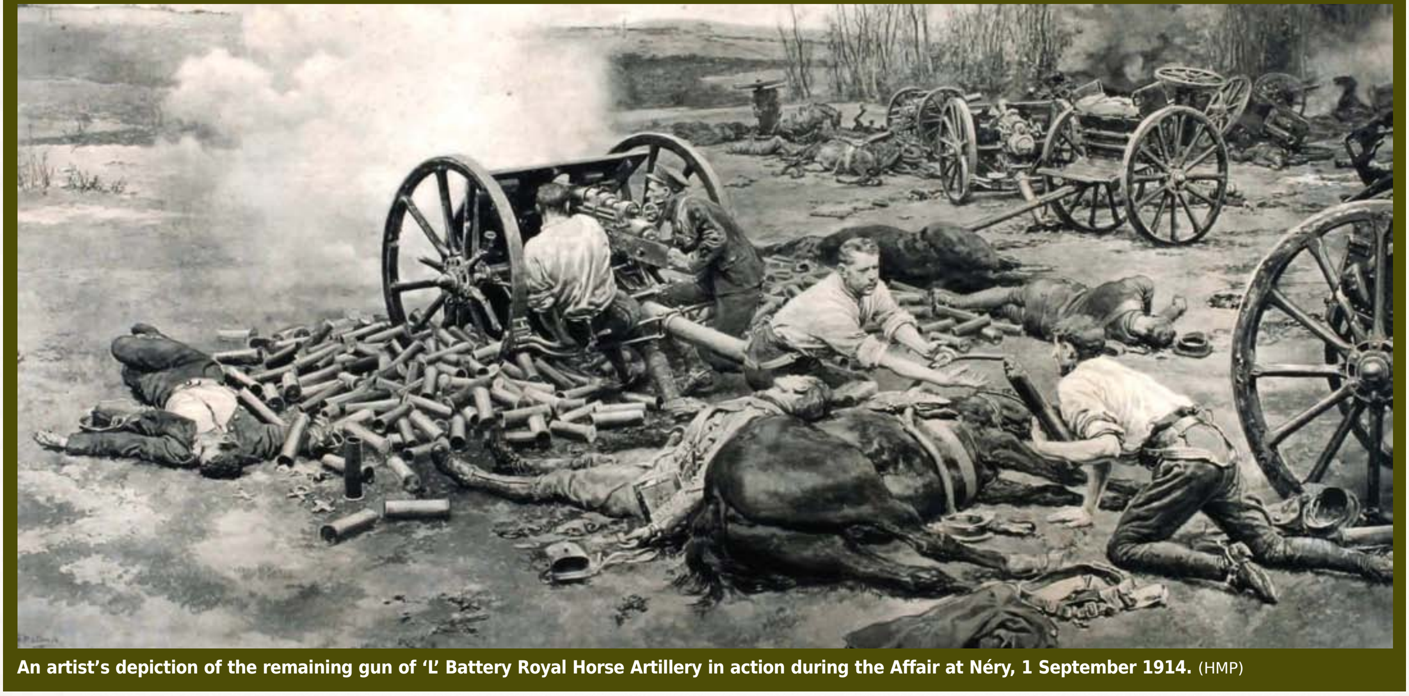
ABOVE: **Issued in 1915 by Gallagher Ltd., these two cigarette cards depict two of the three men who were awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions at Néry.** (HMP)

NOTE:

1. Quoted in Jerry Murland, *Retreat and Rearguard 1914: The BEFs Actions from Mons to Marne* (Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2011), p.131.

THE GALLANT STAND OF 'L' BATTERY

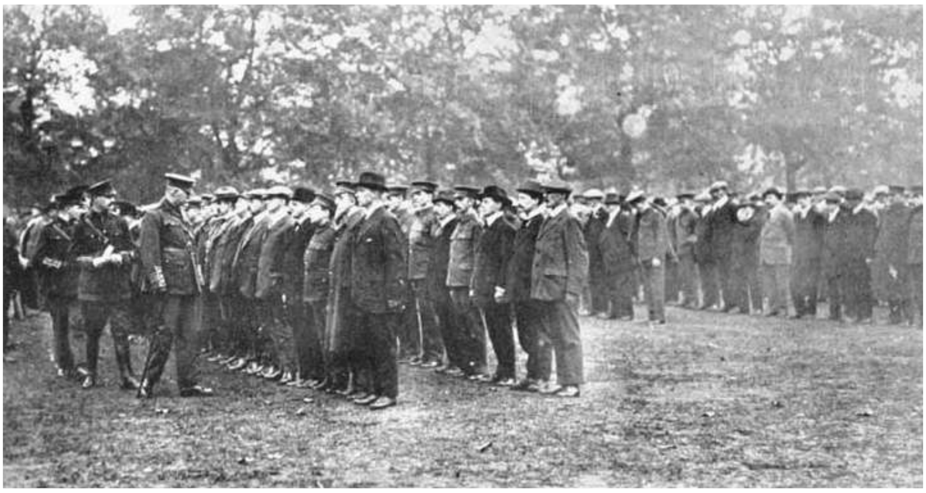
AN ARTIST'S depiction of the remaining gun of 'L' Battery in action at Néry, 1 September 1914. That day, from the heights to the south and east of the village, the Germans opened a storm of shot and shell on 'L' Battery. Only three of the battery's guns could be brought into action, and two of them were quickly knocked out at a range of 600 yards. Captain Edward Bradbury, who was in command, had a leg shot away, but he propped himself up and continued to direct the fire; he died shortly after. When every officer had been killed or wounded, Battery Sergeant Major George Dorrell took command and, assisted by Sergeant David Nelson, Gunner Darbyshire and Driver Osborne, continued to man the guns. For their actions, Bradbury, Dorrell and Nelson were awarded the Victoria Cross, the former posthumously, while Gunner Darbyshire and Driver Osborne were given commissions. Lieutenant Gifford received the *Legion d'Honneur*.



An artist's depiction of the remaining gun of 'L' Battery Royal Horse Artillery in action during the Affair at Néry, 1 September 1914. (HMP)

SUCH WAS the strength of the patriotic fervour that had swept across the United Kingdom following the outbreak of war that the numbers of men who came forward to volunteer for Britain's armed forces had been staggering. Indeed, announced the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, in a speech on 4 September 1914, in the month since war had been declared between 250,000 and 300,000 men had answered Lord Kitchener's appeal.

After a relatively slow start, there had been a sudden surge in recruiting in late August and early September 1914. In total, 478,893 men joined the army between 4 August and 12 September. It was on Thursday, 3 September 1914, that 33,204 men enlisted – the highest daily total of the entire war and more than the average *annual* intake in the years immediately before 1914.



ABOVE: The first inspection of a Pals battalion, that which became known as the 23rd (Service) Battalion Royal Fusiliers (First Sportsman's), underway in Hyde Park in October 1914. This battalion was formed at the Hotel Cecil in the Strand, London, on 25 September 1914, by Mrs E. Cunliffe-Owen. It was initially known as the "Hard as Nails Battalion". (HMP)

UNPRECEDENTED RECRUITMENT

ABOVE: On 10 September 1914, the City of Sheffield officially raised its own battalion, named the 12th (Service) Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment (Sheffield City Battalion). Here recruits are pictured during training at Bramall Lane Football Ground. (WW1IMAGES)

3 SEPTEMBER 1914

Another key factor in these unprecedented levels of enlistment was the granting of permission to committees of municipal officials, industrialists and other dignitaries to organise locally-raised "Pals'" battalions, in which men from the same community or workplace were encouraged to join on the understanding that they would train and, eventually, fight together.

The idea behind these battalions originated from Edward Stanley, the 17th Earl of Derby. He believed that men who met socially as "pals" might respond well to a call for them to serve and fight together, rather than with men they did not know. Derby's idea was put forward in the Liverpool newspapers and he wrote personally to the larger business institutions suggesting that they encourage their workforce to enlist immediately!

Following the newspaper announcement, at 07.30 hours on 28 August 1914, the headquarters of the 5th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, on St Anne Street, opened its doors to a mass of young men that had gathered outside. Soon the drill hall was packed to capacity with men standing in the aisles, the doorways and even on the stairs. Derby's plan was working!

Strictly speaking the first group of colleagues to form a battalion together led to the "Stockbrokers Battalion", the 10th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers, which was raised on 19 August 1914, though not granted battalion status until 21 August. It was composed of men who worked in the offices of the City of London who wanted to serve together.

However, it was what became embodied as the 17th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, which was the first true "Pals" battalion. Having first coined the phrase "battalion of pals", Derby's scheme had recruited enough men to form three battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment in only a week

In total there were ninety-six Pals or City battalions raised across the United Kingdom by the end of the war, the definition of a Pals/City battalion being a unit raised by a local authority or private body which undertook to organise, clothe, billet and feed the recruits – the provision of weapons remained the responsibility of the Army.

In addition to these there were battalions raised by Public Schools, sporting organisations, commercial organisations, ethnic groups, artists and even the Boys Brigade and Church Lads Brigade. A staggering 144 privately-raised battalions were eventually formed. ●

ABOVE: Volunteers parading in Northern Ireland in late 1914. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE SINKING OF HMS PATHFINDER

5 SEPTEMBER 1914

BUILT BY Cammell Laird at Birkenhead, HMS *Pathfinder*, the lead ship of the Pathfinder-class of scout cruisers, was launched on 16 July 1904. Commissioned on 18 July the following year, the outbreak of war in 1914 found her serving with the 8th Destroyer Flotilla based at Rosyth in the Firth of Forth.

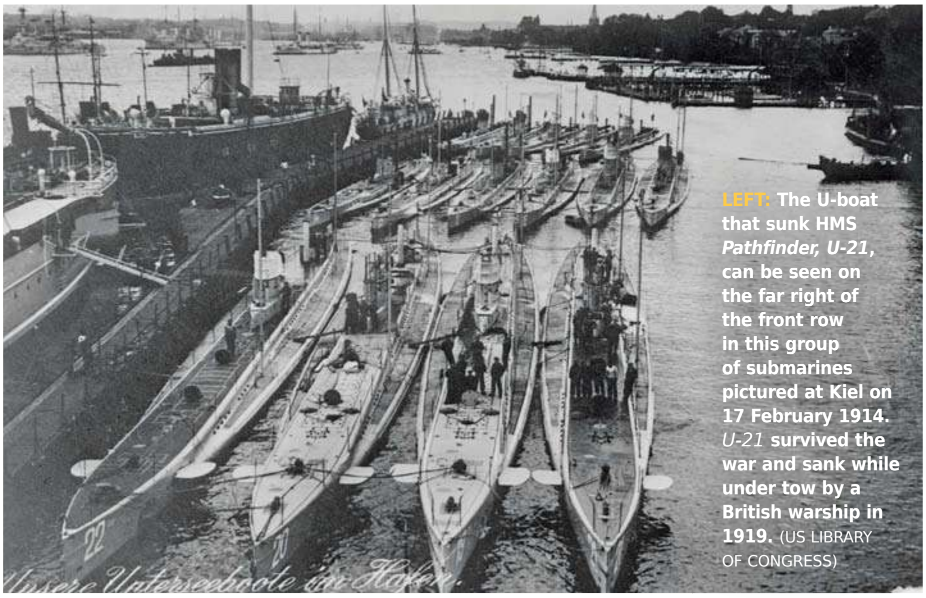
On Saturday, 5 September 1914, *Pathfinder* was returning to Rosyth. However, whilst off *St. Abb's* Head, a rocky promontory on the Berwickshire coast, the scout cruiser crossed the path of the German U-boat *U-21*. According to some accounts, *U-21*, commanded by *Oberleutnant zur See* Otto Hersing, had been directed to patrol this area following intelligence received from the German spy Carl Hans Lody (see page 94).

After tracking HMS *Pathfinder* for a short time, Hersing decided to attack. He fired a single torpedo at 15.43 hours on a bright and sunny afternoon. Moments later the torpedo tore into the scout cruiser on the starboard side just under the bridge. The torpedo apparently set off the forward magazine, the resulting second explosion tore off *Pathfinder*'s bows. The warship sank in just four minutes; nine officers, 250 ratings and two members of canteen staff lost their lives, a total of 261 men.

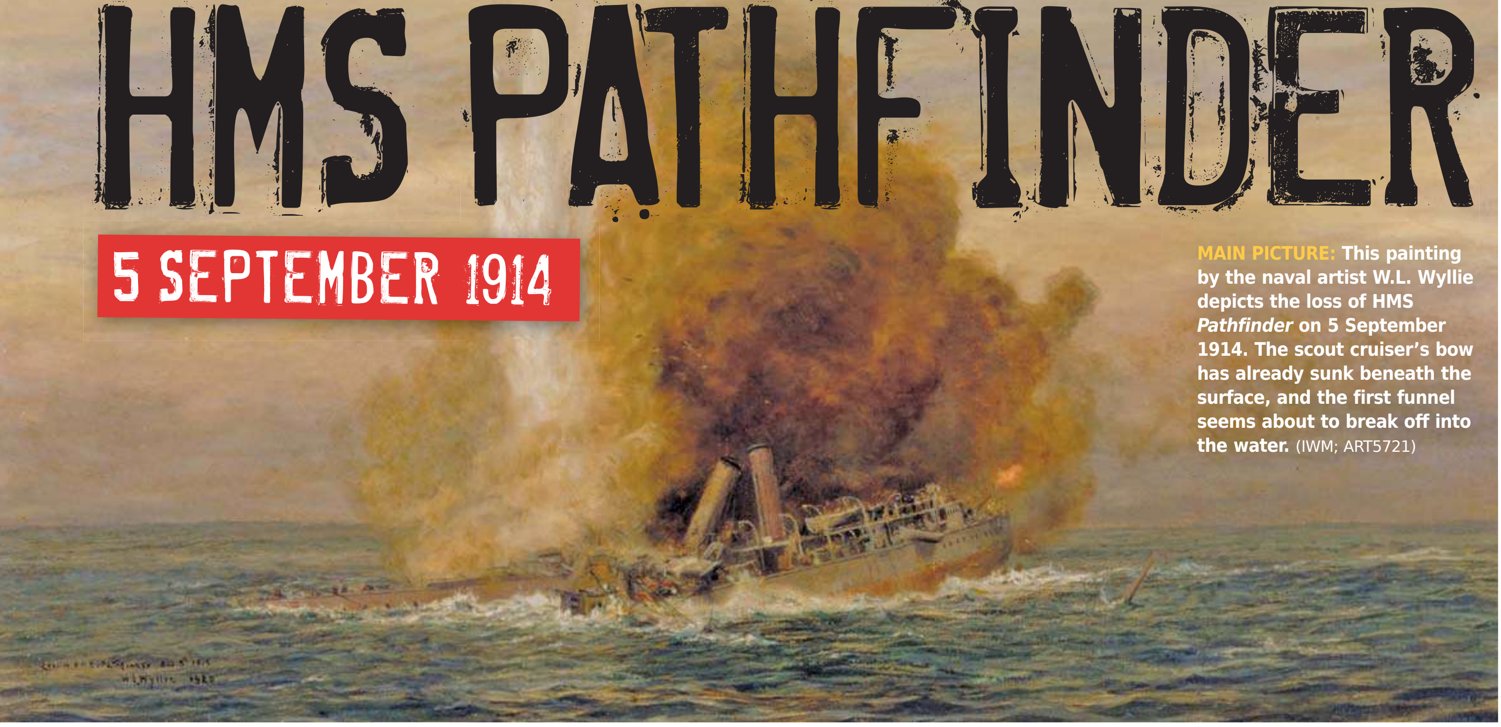
The escorting destroyers HMS *Stag* and HMS *Express*, as well as a number of fishing boats, immediately rushed to the scene. They were greeted by a field of debris, fuel oil, clothing and bodies. Of the few survivors that they were able to rescue, one of whom was the captain (Captain Francis Martin-Leake), four later succumbed to their injuries. One of the survivors subsequently recalled: "The ship gave a heavy lurch forward and took an angle of about forty degrees down by the bow. Water came swirling up to the searchlight platform ... The Captain and his secretary remained with the ship until the very end but somehow both survived".

On shore, the writer Aldous Huxley subsequently noted: "The St. Abbs' lifeboat came in with the most appalling accounts of the scene. There was not a piece of wood, they said, big enough to float a man – and over acres the sea was covered with fragments – human and otherwise. They brought back a sailor's cap with half a man's head inside it. The explosion must have been frightful."

Though the Admiralty initially reported that HMS *Pathfinder* had been mined, the scout cruiser has the distinction of being the first ship in history to be sunk by a self-propelled torpedo fired from a submarine, as well as being the first warship to be sunk by a German U-boat during the First World War. It is a designated vessel under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986, and as such its wreck is protected by law. ●



LEFT: The U-boat that sunk HMS *Pathfinder*, *U-21*, can be seen on the far right of the front row in this group of submarines pictured at Kiel on 17 February 1914. *U-21* survived the war and sank while under tow by a British warship in 1919. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



MAIN PICTURE: This painting by the naval artist W.L. Wyllie depicts the loss of HMS *Pathfinder* on 5 September 1914. The scout cruiser's bow has already sunk beneath the surface, and the first funnel seems about to break off into the water. (IWM; ART5721)

THE MIRACLE OF THE MARNE

ABOVE: **British cavalry advance to the River Aisne in pursuit of the withdrawing German troops, 10 September 1914.** (HMP)

6 SEPTEMBER 1914

IN MANY respects, the Battle of the Marne was the most important battle of the First World War. The speed and strength of the German advance through France had compelled the Allied armies to withdraw southwards towards the River Marne which runs into the Seine just above Paris. It was there that the Allies would have to make their final stand to defend the French capital. That, at least, was how it appeared.

Then, on 3 September 1914, with the Germans just thirty miles from Paris, the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joseph Joffre, became aware of what seemed to be a change in German strategy. Instead of pushing directly towards Paris, the German 1st and 2nd armies swerved to the south-east of Paris in an attempt to cut off the retreating French forces.

This was seen as being a major mistake by the Germans as it exposed their right flank to attack. But as von Molke senior had said during the previous war with France, "Direction: Paris! Objective: the enemy's field armies!" If the Allied armies were defeated then Paris would fall of its own account.

Joffre was quick to ask Sir John French if the BEF would support him in an attack, which was to commence on 6 September. The news that the Allies were going to stop the demoralising retreat and instead attack the enemy, galvanised the French troops.

At almost the last minute the commander of the German 1st Army, von Kluck, learnt of the Allied attack and on 5 September he turned to face the threat to his flank. This move created a thirty-mile gap between the 1st Army and von Bülow's 2nd Army.

Allied aircraft spotted this gap and it was immediately exploited by elements of the BEF and the French Fifth Army. The gap between the two German armies was forced wider, communications between them became more difficult, and the German Chief-of-Staff feared that the Allies would be able to destroy each army individually. After a week of fighting the advance was halted and the Germans had begun to withdraw to the River Aisne. Paris had been saved. The Germans had suffered their first major defeat – they were not invincible after all. It seemed like a miracle.

"One must suppose upon the whole that the Marne was the greatest battle ever fought in the world," declared Winston Churchill. "The elemental forces which there met in grapple and collision of course far exceeded anything that has ever happened. It is also true that the Marne decided the World War. Half a dozen other cardinal crises have left their gaunt monuments along the road of tribulation which the nations trod ... But never after the Marne had Germany a chance of absolute triumph."

Von Molke junior agreed. He told the Kaiser, "Your Majesty, we have lost the war." He was replaced as Chief of the General Staff on 14 September by Erich von Falkenhayn.

The elemental forces to which Churchill referred amounted to more than 2,500,000 men, 1,485,000 of whom were Germans. It involved thirty-nine French and six British divisions and forty-seven German. More than a quarter-of-a-million Allied soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner, slightly fewer Germans.

The First Battle of the Marne, which ended on 12 September 1914, brought to an end the war of movement that had dominated the fighting since the beginning of August. Instead, with the German advance brought to a halt, stalemate and trench warfare ensued. Other battles would be fought over the next four years but never again would so many men be thrown into a single battle. Never again would Germany come so close to victory. ●

MAIN PICTURE: **Men of the 1st Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, part of the 19th Brigade, come under fire from German artillery on the Signy-Signets road during the Battle of the Marne, 8 September 1914. A number of men sustained serious injuries and nine horses were killed in this particular incident.** (IWM; Q51489)

10 SEPTEMBER 1914

FRENCH'S FIRST DESPATCH

THOUGH THE initial reports of the fighting in Belgium and France had appeared in the newspapers, the first official despatch regarding the actions of the British Expeditionary Force, from its Commander-in-Chief, Sir John French, was not published in *The London Gazette* until 10 September 1914.

Sir John French had completed his despatch at his headquarters in France three days earlier. Initially, French noted, everything proceeded well: "The transport of the troops from England both by sea and by rail was effected in the best order and without a check. Each unit arrived at its destination in this country well within the scheduled time."

French's account then went on to cover the operations of the BEF from when it arrived in France and made its way into Belgium alongside the French armies. He then explained what happened as he advanced towards Mons: "At 6 a.m., on August 23rd, I assembled the Commanders of the First and Second Corps and Cavalry Division at a point close to the position, and explained the general situation of the Allies, and what I understood to be General Joffre's plan. I discussed with them at some length the immediate situation in front of us.

"From information I received from French Headquarters I understood that little more than one, or at most two, of the enemy's Army Corps, with perhaps one Cavalry Division, were in front of my position; and I was aware of no attempted outflanking movement by the enemy. I was confirmed in this opinion by the fact that my patrols encountered no undue opposition in their reconnoitring operations. The observation of my aeroplanes seemed also to bear out this estimate.

"About 3 p.m. on Sunday, the 23rd, reports began coming in to the effect that the enemy was commencing an attack on the Mons line, apparently in some strength, but that the right of the position from Mons and Bray was being particularly threatened."

This clearly shows the confused situation French found himself in. Until the Germans actually attacked the BEF on the 23rd, he had little idea just what he was faced with.

He then explained his decision to retreat from Mons: "The French were still retiring, and I had no support except such as was afforded by the Fortress of Maubeuge; and the determined attempts of the enemy to get round my left flank assured me that it was his intention to hem me against that place and surround me. I felt that not a moment must be lost in retiring to another position."

Amidst these depressing reports, French was able to sound one genuinely positive note, which was the "glorious" stand made by Smith-Dorrien at Le Cateau: "I say without hesitation that the saving of the left wing of the Army under my command on the morning of the 26th August could never have been accomplished unless a commander of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination had been present to personally conduct the operation." The period French examined in his first despatch ended on 7 September 1914. ●

BELOW: Field Marshal Sir John French pictured with Staff Officers at his General Headquarters. French had become Chief of the Imperial General Staff on 15 March 1912, and was promoted to Field Marshal on 3 June 1913. (HMP)

ABOVE: Sir John French inspecting a hospital train. He died on 22 May 1925, aged 72. An estimated 7,000 people filed past his coffin during the first two hours that it lay in state, many of them veterans of the retreat from Mons. Haig, Robertson, Hamilton and Smith-Dorrien were pall bearers at his funeral at Westminster Abbey – the first for a major First World War leader. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS

IN HIS despatch, Sir John French wrote the following in respect of the men of the Royal Flying Corps: "I wish particularly to bring to your Lordships' notice the admirable work done by the Royal Flying Corps under Sir David Henderson. Their skill, energy and perseverance have been beyond all praise. They have furnished me with the most complete and accurate information which has been of incalculable value in the conduct of the operations. Fired at constantly both by friend and foe, and not hesitating to fly in every kind of weather, they have remained undaunted throughout. Further, by actually fighting in the air, they have succeeded in destroying five of the enemy's machines."

THE CAPTURE OF RABAUL

11 SEPTEMBER 1914

THE MOMENTOUS events that led to the outbreak of the First World War occurred during a Federal election campaign in Australia. On 3 August 1914, Australia's Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, declared that "whatever happens, Australia is a part of the Empire right to the full. Remember that when the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war ... I want to make it quite clear that all our resources in Australia are in the Empire and for the Empire, and the preservation and security of the Empire."

Following the declaration of war Australia immediately pledged its support for the UK. The new Labour Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, had stated shortly before he was elected that, "Australians will stand beside our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling".

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Australian armed forces was to seize or neutralise the German territories in the Pacific known as the "Protectorate of German New Guinea", which stretched from the Caroline and Marshall Islands in the north to New Britain and German New Guinea in the south. It was considered essential that facilities in these territories should be denied to the enemy, and in particular Vice Admiral von Spee's East Asiatic Squadron of the Imperial German Navy. Based in Tsingtao, China, the squadron comprised the armoured cruisers SMS *Scharnhorst* and SMS *Gneisenau* and the light cruisers SMS *Emden*, SMS *Nurnberg* and SMS *Leipzig*.

ABOVE: The first batch of troops that would form part of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force heading towards the quayside at Sydney, en route to Rabaul. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H11567)

BELOW: Australian troops pictured beside a captured gun in an emplacement at Rabaul in 1914. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H01986)

The initial move was made on 30 August 1914, when the Australian ships *Australia* and *Melbourne*, in company with HM Ships *Psyche*, *Philomel* and *Pyramus* and the French cruiser *Montcalm*, escorted a force of 1,400 New Zealand troops to occupy German Samoa. Faced with this force the colony surrendered without a fight. *Melbourne* was then ordered to the German territory of Nauru to destroy its wireless station. On 9 September *Melbourne* landed twenty-five personnel without opposition, detained the German administrator and destroyed the already disabled wireless equipment.

A major operation to seize German interests in New Guinea, and the Island of New Britain, was planned. To achieve this the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF), was formed, consisting of six companies of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, a battalion of infantry at war strength

MAIN PICTURE: The Allied task force, which, headed by the flagship *Australia*, had transported the men of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, enters Rabaul harbour, September 1914. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; J03326)

(1,023 strong), two machine-gun sections, a signaling section, and a detachment of the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC).

On 7 September 1914, the naval force, which included *Australia*, *Sydney*, *Encounter*, *Parramatta*, *Warrego*, *Yarra*, the submarines *AE1* and *AE2*, a store-ship, three colliers, and the transport SS *Berrima*, with the ANMEF embarked, sailed for Rabaul.The initial landings took place at dawn on 11 September 1914 at Kabakaul on the Eastern tip of the Island of New Britain.

Under the command of Lieutenant Bowen, Royal Australian Navy, twenty-five sailors marched inland to seize their objective, the settlement of Bitapaka. A scouting party, having deviated from the main road, soon found itself directly in the rear of the German first line of defence. After a short skirmish, the German in charge was shot and wounded. His men then surrendered.

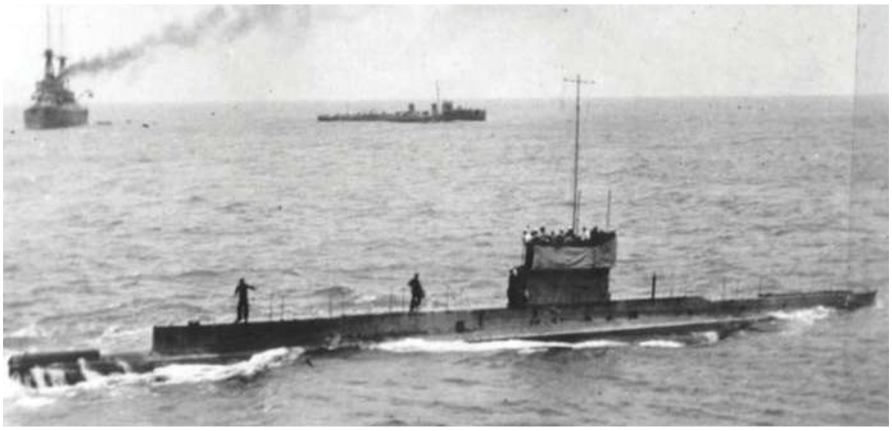
Bowen decided to a use deception to get the remaining defenders to capitulate. The wounded captive was then directed to march ahead of the main force and announce in German that 800 troops had landed and that his comrades should surrender. The deception worked, the commander of the German defences, believing that a superior force had indeed landed, ordered a withdrawal of his forces inland. Bitapaka's defenders, however, continued to offer active resistance.

Bowen called for reinforcements but continued to push on towards his objective. His party encountered a series of enemy trenches and came under fire from snipers positioned in the trees. It was there that Australia suffered its first casualties of the war.

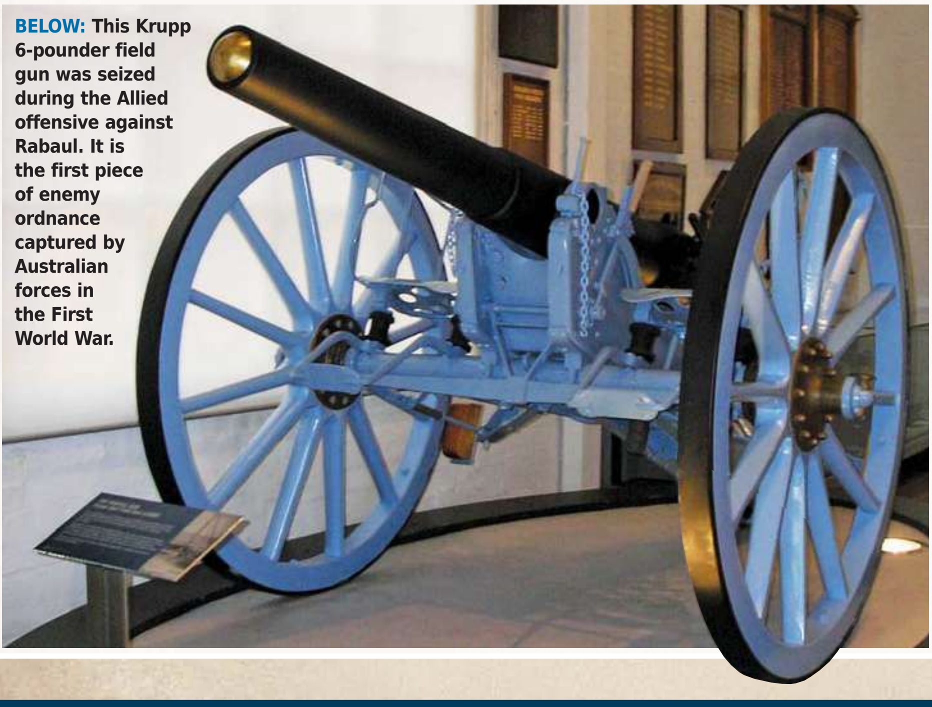
After they encountered German soldiers on Bita Paka Road, Able Seaman William Williams was shot in the stomach, at which point Captain Brian Pockley from the AAMC, gave his Red Cross armband to another naval serviceman, Stoker Kember, to carry Williams to the rear. This was done to protect the transporting of the wounded Williams. Pockley, however, was himself shot shortly after. Both Pockley and Williams were taken back to HMAT *Berrima*; they both died on board that afternoon. Six Australians were killed and four wounded in the battle of Bita Paka.

Williams, according to the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has the distinction of being "the first recorded Australian casualty of the First World War". Pockley is the first Australian Army officer to lose his life.

After reinforcements were landed, the Australians began outflanking the enemy. However, as the advance began Bowen was wounded by a sniper. Additional reinforcements were requested and at 13.00 hours a company of naval ratings arrived under the command of Lieutenant Commander Elwell RN, who immediately took command. Elwell, though, was killed leading a bayonet charge on the German defences.



ABOVE: The success of the operation was marred by the disappearance of *AE1* on 14 September while patrolling the narrow St George's Strait between New Britain and New Ireland – the first Royal Australian Navy vessel lost in wartime. No trace of the submarine or its crew has ever been found. Taken at a rendezvous off Rossell Island on 9 September 1914, this is the last known photograph of *AE1*. Both HMAS *Yarra* (centre) and HMAS *Australia* (on the left) can be seen in the background. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A02603)



BELOW: This Krupp 6-pounder field gun was seized during the Allied offensive against Rabaul. It is the first piece of enemy ordnance captured by Australian forces in the First World War.

The attack overwhelmed the defenders, who reluctantly agreed to the unconditional surrender both of the German forces and the wireless station. Lieutenant Bond, RANR, was ordered to advance and secure the wireless station. Following several small skirmishes, during which more casualties were incurred, the last German resistance was quelled. For his efforts Bond received the Distinguished Service Order, becoming the first Australian serviceman to be decorated for gallantry in the war.

The following day Herbertshöhe (now known as Kokopo), the capital of the German colonial administration on New Britain, and Rabaul on Blanche Bay were secured without opposition, following a bombardment by *Encounter*. The remaining German forces in the field subsequently surrendered.

Within a few weeks most of the German territories in the area, including Bougainville and the Admiralty Islands, had been occupied without further opposition, at a cost of six dead and four wounded. ●

BATTLE OF THE AISNE

ABOVE: **A German field kitchen captured by French troops during the fighting on the Aisne in 1914.** (US LIRBRARY OF CONGRESS)

12 SEPTEMBER 1914

THE GERMANS had failed in their great drive upon Paris. The British and French armies had counter-attacked the Germans at the Battle of the Marne so successfully that the German 1st and 2nd armies were in danger of being encircled and destroyed. After the German commander, von Moltke, suffered a nervous breakdown, Generals Bülow and von Kluck took over, ordering a retreat to the River Aisne behind which they hoped to be able to regroup and resume the offensive.

As the enemy withdrew, the BEF and the French pursued until, on 12 September 1914, the Germans turned to face their pursuers on their chosen ground above the Aisne. The Germans occupied high ground north of the river, which was around 100 yards wide, where they dug themselves into strong defensive positions.

In the early hours of Sunday, 13 September, the leading elements of the BEF began crossing the Aisne. Corporal John Lucy of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles was one of those involved in the 7th Brigade's attempts to cross the river at the railway bridge to the east of Vailly: "As we approached the bridge we saw that it was completely wrecked; a tangled mass of ironwork, most of which was submerged, with a dead horse held against it by the current, and only a line of single planks, which sagged in the middle, as a means of getting over."

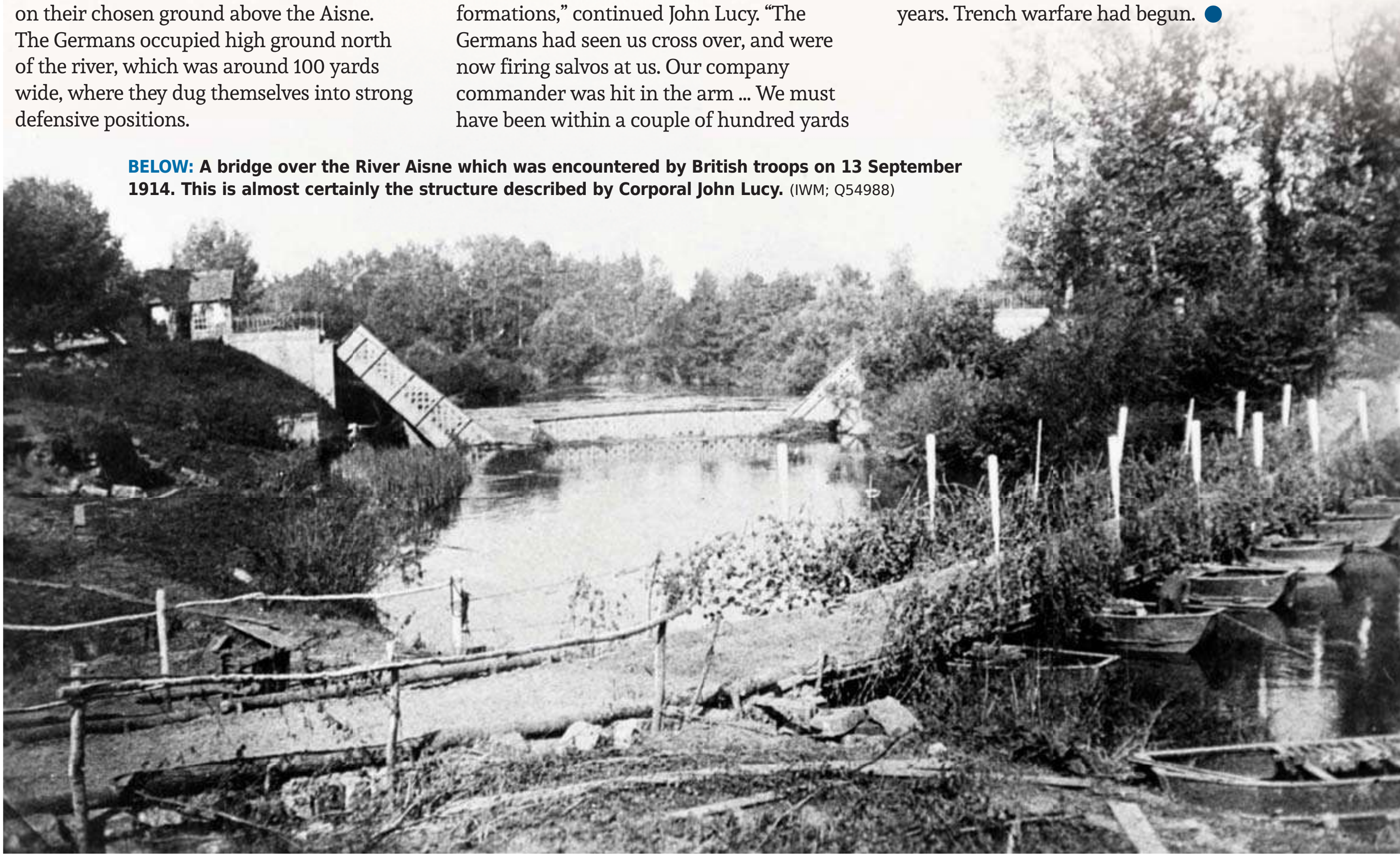
The Royal Irish Rifles came under artillery fire as they crossed the single line of planks. A number of officers and men were hit, but in the excitement of the moment, the Irishmen rushed up the hill, though the enemy infantry were so well dug in that they could not be seen.

"We deployed rapidly into attack formations," continued John Lucy. "The Germans had seen us cross over, and were now firing salvos at us. Our company commander was hit in the arm ... We must have been within a couple of hundred yards of the enemy riflemen, but though we looked hard through the undergrowth we could not see them ... Quicker we went, on to our toes and crouching lower. Their rifles cracked sharply now, and the whistle and whine of bullets passing wide changed to the startling bangs of bullets just missing one."

The British and French troops crossed the Aisne on pontoons or partially destroyed bridges such as that used by the Royal Irish Rifles, and established themselves firmly on the northern bank of the river. The next day, further attempts were made at driving the Germans from their positions but little progress was made.

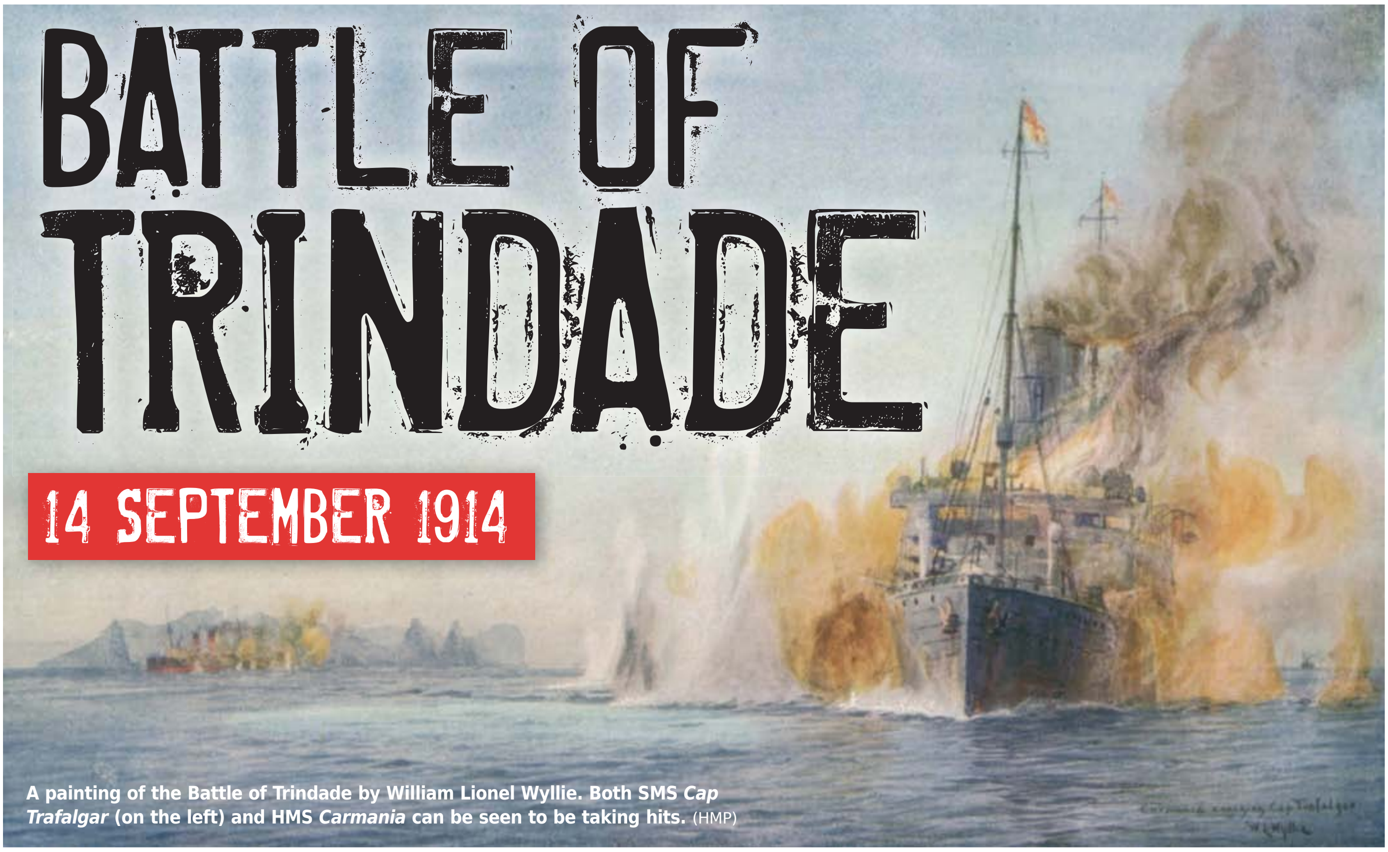
It soon became apparent that neither side was going to give ground. Over the course of the next few days, German, British and French dug energetically to strengthen their positions – positions they would hold for the next four years. Trench warfare had begun. ●

BELOW: **A bridge over the River Aisne which was encountered by British troops on 13 September 1914. This is almost certainly the structure described by Corporal John Lucy.** (IWM; Q54988)



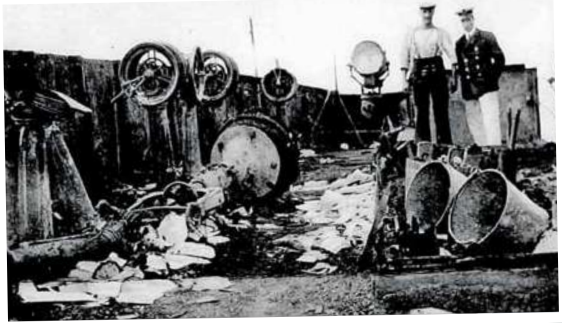
BATTLE OF TRINDADE

14 SEPTEMBER 1914



A painting of the Battle of Trindade by William Lionel Wyllie. Both SMS *Cap Trafalgar* (on the left) and HMS *Carmania* can be seen to be taking hits. (HMP)

THE GERMAN auxiliary cruiser SMS *Cap Trafalgar* was steaming in South American waters on a commerce raiding mission when she came across several German colliers trapped in the region by the Allied navies in the Western Approaches. Cap Trafalgar, in need of supplies, headed to the Trindade and Martim Vaz archipelago where, located off the Brazilian coast, the Germans had established a small, hidden supply base.



ABOVE: **The shattered bridge of HMS *Carmania* after her victory over SMS *Cap Trafalgar*.** (HMP)

When *Cap Trafalgar* arrived at the supply station on 14 September, she gave away her position early that morning by smoke from her funnels. The crew of the Royal Navy's auxiliary cruiser HMS *Carmania*, a former ocean liner which was designed to fight merchant vessels and small enemy warships, spotted the smoke and moved to engage. Coincidentally, *Cap Trafalgar*, also intended for use against enemy merchant fleets, had been altered to resemble *Carmania* (some accounts wrongly claim that both ships were disguised as each other).

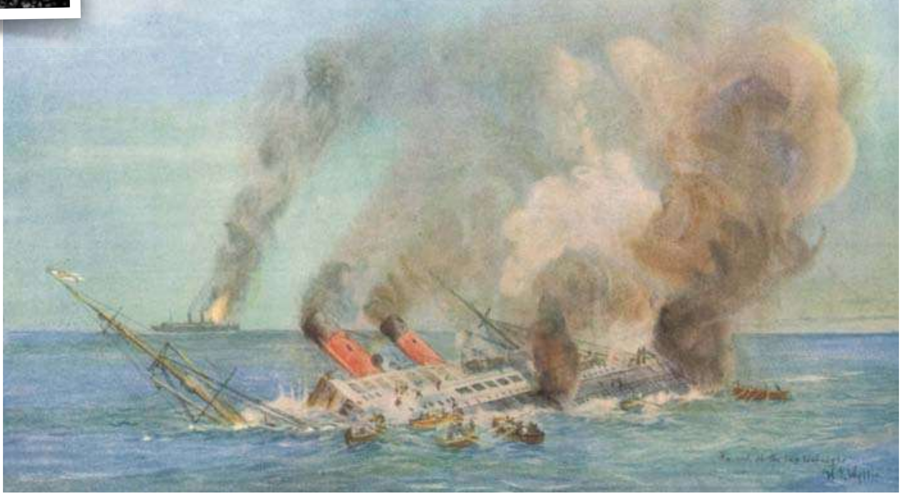
Carmania moved into Trindade's only sheltered anchorage, surprising *Cap Trafalgar* and two enemy colliers. Both the British and German commanders believed that in order to obtain a decisive victory, they would need more space to manoeuvre their ships. Consequently, they steamed several miles into open sea before turning into each other and commencing hostilities.

HMS *Carmania* fired the first shots, which fell short, thus allowing *Cap Trafalgar* to strike the first blow. For some ninety minutes the two ships fought a fierce duel, even using machine-guns to target each other's crew. At first the German fire was more effective.

Eventually, as the two ships closed to within a few hundred yards of each other, the British fire became more accurate and flames began to spread aboard the German raider. It was *Carmania* that received most of the hits during the engagement – seventy-three hits in total. The British vessel's bridge was completely destroyed and she had been damaged below the waterline. However, just when things began to look dire for the Royal Navy, *Cap Trafalgar* turned away and began lowering life rafts, having been holed below the waterline and taking on water. She soon sank.

The German colliers were able to rescue 279 German sailors from the sea and rafts. Between sixteen and fifty-one of the crew are cited by different sources as killed in action or drowned. *Carmania*'s crew suffered nine dead and several wounded. ●

BELOW: **The final moments of the Battle of Trindade are illustrated in another of William Lionel Wyllie's painting, this one depicting SMS *Cap Trafalgar* sinking.** (HMP)



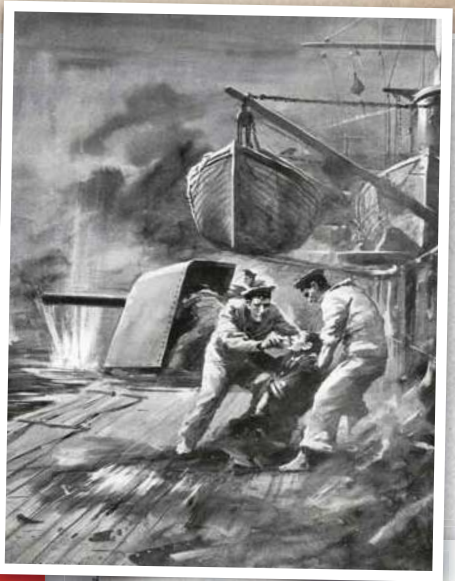
STRIKING THE COLOURS

20 SEPTEMBER 1914

LAUNCHED AT Palmers Yard, Newcastle upon Tyne in 1898, HMS *Pegasus* was commissioned the following year. Built at a cost of £150,000 she had a complement of 200 men and an armament of eight 4-inch guns.

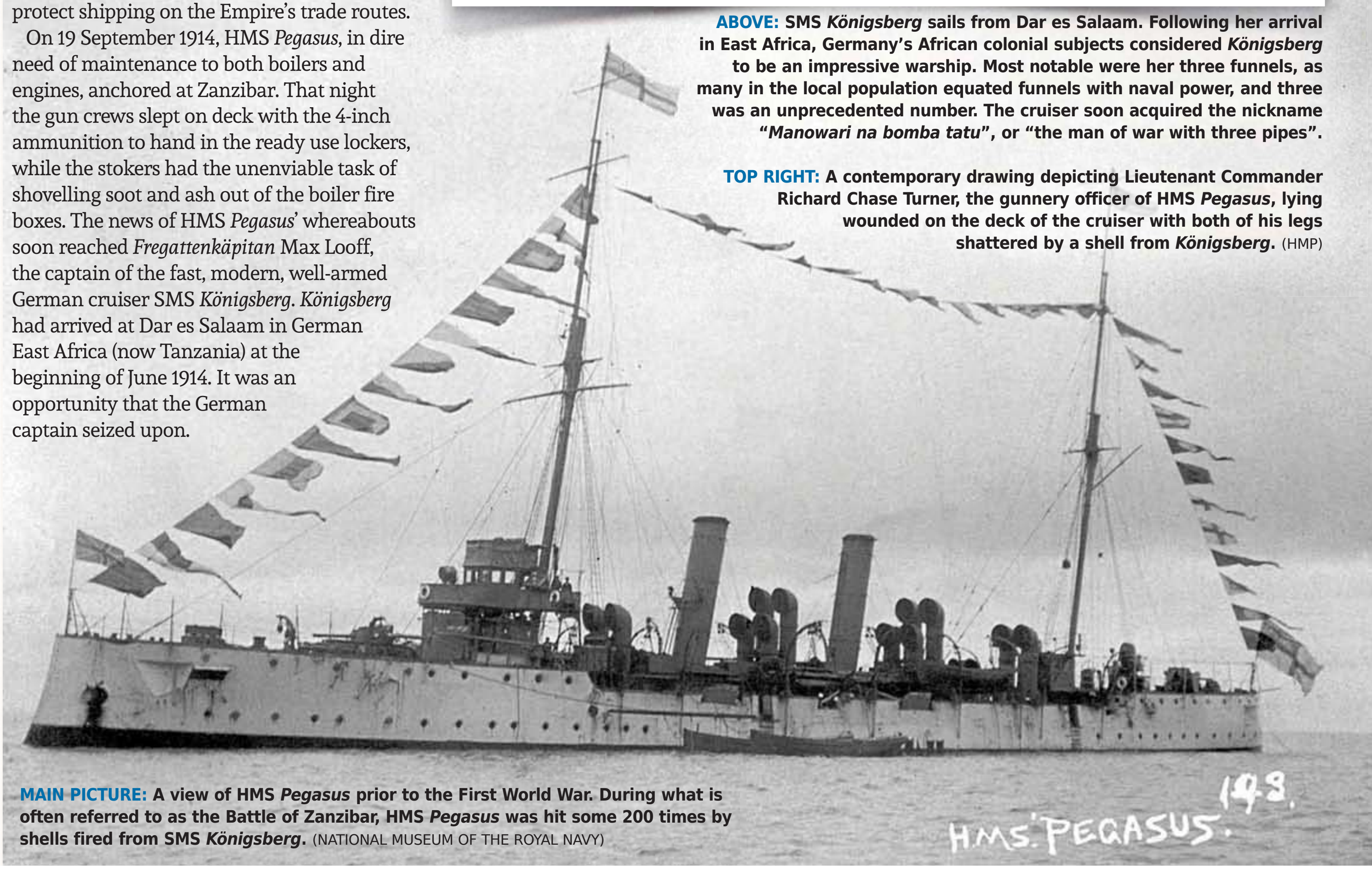
After an eventful series of deployments to the West Indies and Far East, she was re-commissioned in 1913 and eventually became one of the three warships that comprised the East Indies Squadron under Rear Admiral George Fowler King-Hall. The other two out-dated cruisers were HMS *Astraea* and the flagship HMS *Hyacinth*. Their primary role had been to patrol the coastline and show the flag at distant ports and islands as far afield as Ascension in the South Atlantic, Zanzibar and Mombasa, and in time of war to protect shipping on the Empire's trade routes.

On 19 September 1914, HMS *Pegasus*, in dire need of maintenance to both boilers and engines, anchored at Zanzibar. That night the gun crews slept on deck with the 4-inch ammunition to hand in the ready use lockers, while the stokers had the unenviable task of shovelling soot and ash out of the boiler fire boxes. The news of HMS *Pegasus*' whereabouts soon reached *Fregattenkäpitan* Max Looff, the captain of the fast, modern, well-armed German cruiser SMS *Königsberg*. *Königsberg* had arrived at Dar es Salaam in German East Africa (now Tanzania) at the beginning of June 1914. It was an opportunity that the German captain seized upon.

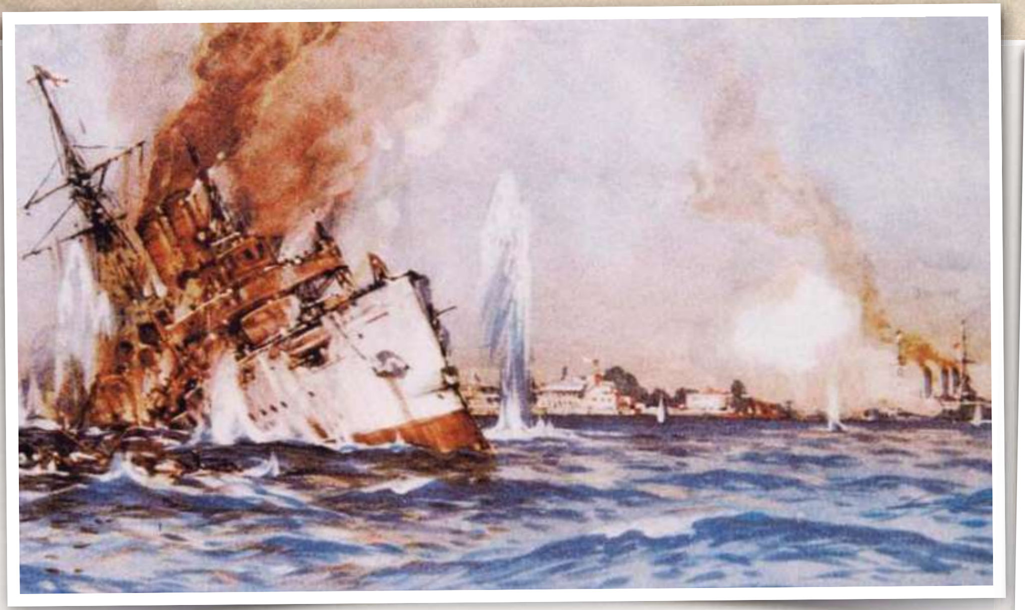


ABOVE: SMS *Königsberg* sails from Dar es Salaam. Following her arrival in East Africa, Germany's African colonial subjects considered *Königsberg* to be an impressive warship. Most notable were her three funnels, as many in the local population equated funnels with naval power, and three was an unprecedented number. The cruiser soon acquired the nickname "*Manowari na bomba tatu*", or "the man of war with three pipes".

TOP RIGHT: A contemporary drawing depicting Lieutenant Commander Richard Chase Turner, the gunnery officer of HMS *Pegasus*, lying wounded on the deck of the cruiser with both of his legs shattered by a shell from *Königsberg*. (HMP)



MAIN PICTURE: A view of HMS *Pegasus* prior to the First World War. During what is often referred to as the Battle of Zanzibar, HMS *Pegasus* was hit some 200 times by shells fired from SMS *Königsberg*. (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY)



ABOVE: A German artist's depiction of HMS *Pegasus* during the attack by SMS *Königsberg* on 20 September 1914. Because the German warship was always at least 2,000 yards beyond the range of *Pegasus*' guns, no British rounds struck the German warship, though it did suffer some splinter or shrapnel damage. (COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)

Having just completed coaling in the Rufiji river delta south of Dar es Salaam, Looff set course for Zanzibar. In the darkness that night on 19 September the German warship managed to slip past at least two British guard ships without being spotted. *Fregattenkäpitan* Max Looff himself later recounted what happened next:

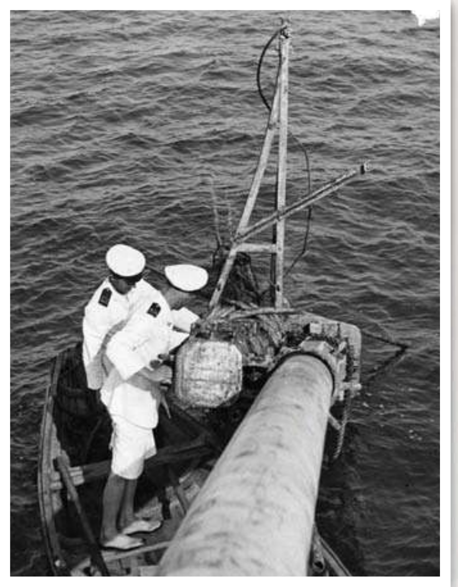
"Although we are through the entrance to Zanzibar, there are many invisible reefs and strong currents which at night are extremely difficult to navigate, but *Königsberg* still manages to arrive south of the roadstead in darkness. Soon the rays of light enable us to distinguish an English two-funnelled cruiser at anchor under the land next to Ras Shangami. In the weak light she looks like *Astraea*, but as the light grows stronger I perceive her as *Pegasus*."

At 05.10 hours on the 20th, and at a range of 9,000 yards, *Königsberg* raised her flag. *Pegasus*' Officer of the Watch, Lieutenant H.V. Lavington, later gave the following report describing what happened next:

"At about 5.5 am I was on the upper bridge when a signalman reported that he thought he could see a ship in the Northern Pass. I examined the spot through my glasses and then called the First Lieutenant, who was sleeping on the Upper Bridge, as I was not sure if there was anything there.

"The First Lieutenant turned out and examined it and as it was lighter we saw it was a piece of land. We then looked all round the horizon and at 5.15 am the First Lieutenant told me to secure the guns. He then asked me if I had any cocoa on the bridge and I said 'no', but I would go aft and order some tea." At this point, *Königsberg*'s guns opened fire.

The crew of HMS *Pegasus* awoke to the scream and crash of five shells exploding alongside; the German attack was devastating. As the elderly British cruiser's crew desperately tried to raise steam, black smoke could be seen pouring from both funnels.

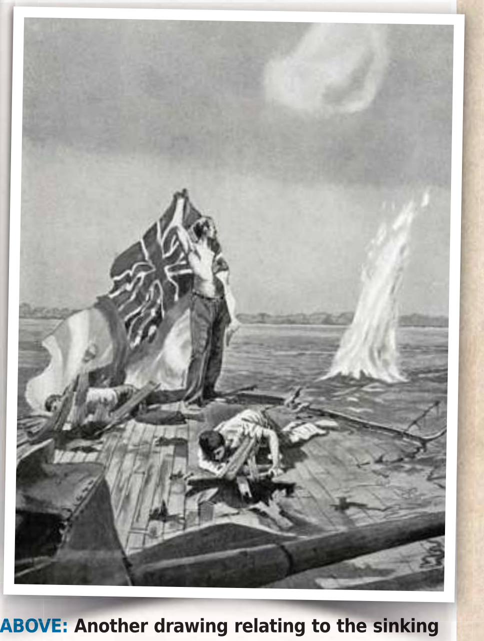


ABOVE: Royal Navy officers examine the mast of HMS *Pegasus* sticking out of the water in Zanzibar harbour. In his report detailing the attack by this warship on HMS *Pegasus*, Commander Ingles noted that "the conduct of the Ship's company generally under very trying circumstances has been all that I could desire". (COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)

However, it would prove futile as the German gunners had already found their range.

Shell after shell crashed home leaving *Pegasus* and its crew reeling under the onslaught. A large explosion was observed on *Pegasus*' forecastle, whilst another shell tore off the forward funnel and the ship was on fire in several places. Eight minutes into the action, the British warship's guns ceased firing, most of the gun crews having been killed or severely wounded.

At this point, the fighting took an unusual turn, as *Pegasus*' captain, Commander John A. Ingles, took the most unusual step of striking the colours. "The battery commander ... reported the enemy were showing a white flag which he had seen through the artillery rangefinder," noted *Fregattenkäpitan* Looff.



ABOVE: Another drawing relating to the sinking of HMS *Pegasus*. The original caption states: "During the action the flag of the *Pegasus* was shot away from its staff. A Marine at once ran forward, picked it up, and waved it aloft. He was struck down while standing on the deck exposed to the enemy's fire, but another came forward to take his place. Until the end the flag was kept flying." This illustration was one of a number produced during the First World War in an attempt to obscure the fact that *Pegasus* had struck the colours. (HMP)

However, the attack continued for a further forty minutes before Looff finally ordered his guns to cease fire.

HMS *Pegasus* did not sink immediately, but lay with a strong list over to port and with fires still burning. Of her crew of 234 officers and men, thirty-five lay dead – a further ten died in the following hours and days – and fifty-nine had been wounded.

The loss of HMS *Pegasus* made headlines around the world and the Admiralty went to great lengths to prevent the public learning the truth about the striking of the colours. Accounts as to when a Royal Navy warship had last struck the colours vary considerably, though it is possible that it had been over a century earlier when such an act last happened. ●

ABOVE: A porthole recovered from the wreck of HMS *Pegasus*. In 1955 the cruiser's remains were sold by the Zanzibar Government to an Italian salvage firm for £500. The latter broke open the wreck with explosives and removed the engines, boilers and propellers, leaving other debris scattered across the seabed. (COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE)

DISASTER IN THE NORTH SEA

22 SEPTEMBER 1914

THE THREE outdated Cressy-class armoured cruisers HMS *Cressy*, HMS *Aboukir* and HMS *Hogue* were part of a force ordered to maintain a patrol in the part of the North Sea known as the Broad Fourteens. The task was controversial as some senior naval officers considered that the warships were vulnerable to attack. It was claimed, however, that no more suitable vessels were available. Correspondingly, the force undertaking the patrols came to be known to the men as "The Live Bait Squadron".

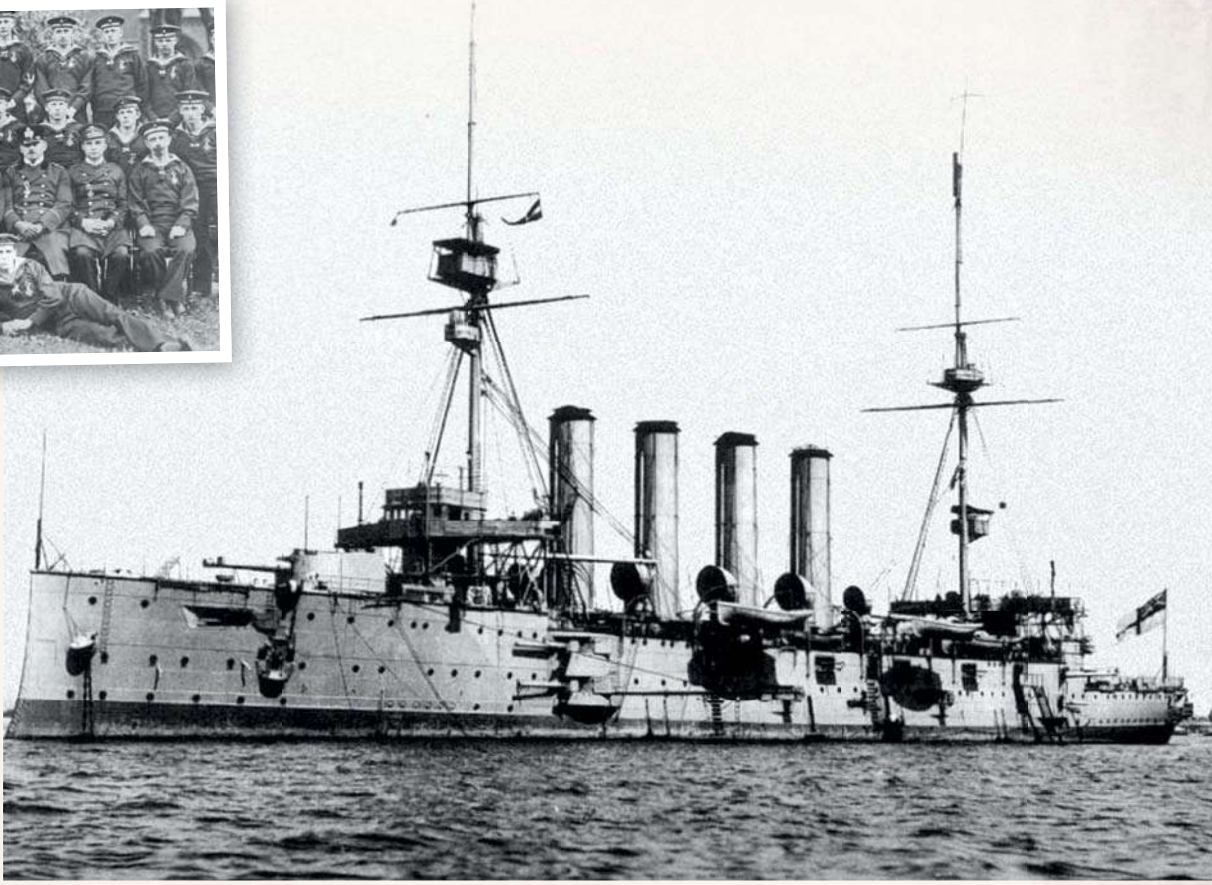
Early on 22 September 1914, the German submarine U-9, under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Otto Weddigen, sighted the three cruisers of the 7th Cruiser Squadron steaming NNE at ten knots without zigzagging. Having manoeuvered into position, at 06.25 hours Weddigen fired a single torpedo at HMS *Aboukir*. The elderly warship flooded quickly, lost power and started to list. The order to abandon ship was given; thirty minutes later, HMS *Aboukir* slipped beneath the waves.

HMS *Hogue* had moved in to assist the stricken cruiser, believing that she had been the victim of a mine. Weddigen fired two more torpedoes. These struck *Hogue* amidships and her engine room rapidly flooded. In just ten minutes she too had gone.

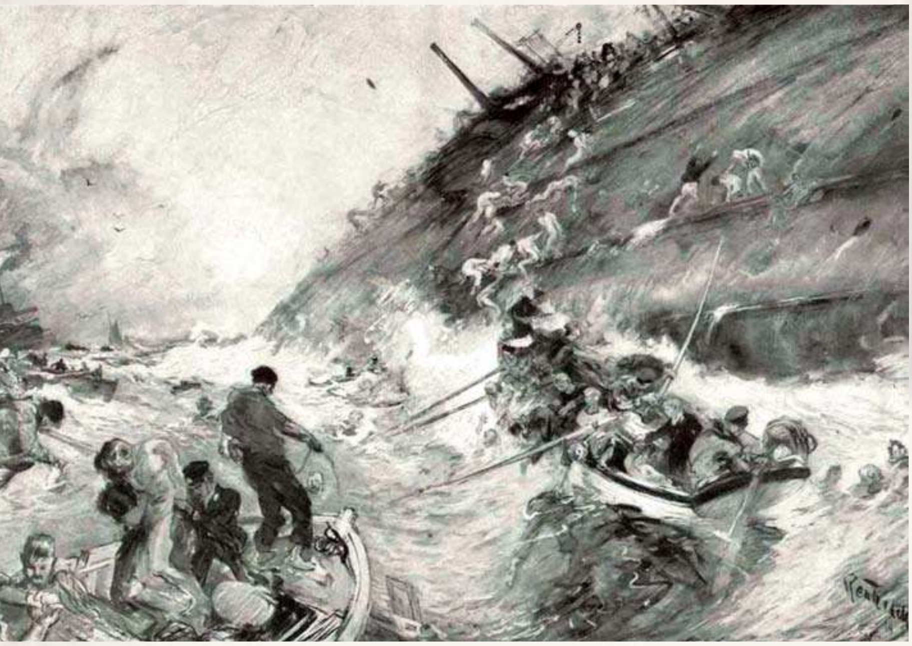
O. WEDDIGEN
KOMMANDANT
U
9

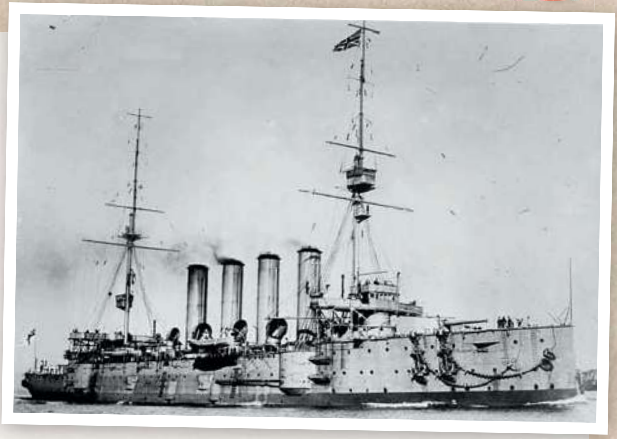
ABOVE: ***Kapitänleutnant* Otto Weddigen and his crew returned to a hero's welcome. Weddigen himself was awarded the Iron Cross, 1st Class, while his crew each received the Iron Cross, 2nd Class. This commemorative medallion was commercially produced in Germany to celebrate Weddigen's and *U-9*'s achievements.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **The crew of the German U-boat *U-9* pictured after the events of 22 September 1914. This German submarine went on to have an active career, also sinking HMS *Hawke* and serving in the Baltic, being the only one of her class to survive the war. Her commander, *Kapitänleutnant* Otto Weddigen, was not so fortunate. He was transferred to *U-29* which was rammed and sunk by HMS *Dreadnought*, with the loss of all her crew, in 1915. This was the only action HMS *Dreadnought* saw despite being such a famous ship.**
(US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



ABOVE: **The lead-ship of the Cressy-class armoured cruisers, HMS *Cressy*. The Cressy-class also represented the first British warships to serve overseas that were not copper sheathed but instead painted with anti-fouling paints, this saving £40,000 and over 500 tons in displacement.** (HMP)





ABOVE: The first of the warships sunk by *U-9* on the morning of 22 September 1914, was HMS *Aboukir* (seen here). (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

LEFT: A contemporary sketch showing HMS *Cressy* sinking. HMS *Cressy* was notable for being the Royal Navy's first armoured cruiser. Unlike previous protected cruisers she had an armoured belt, made possible by the introduction of face hardened Krupp armour which allowed worthwhile protection for an acceptable weight of armour. (HMP)

Now alone, HMS *Cressy*'s captain ordered his boats be lowered to help rescue survivors. Then, at about 07.20 hours, the inevitable happened.

On board *Cressy* a lookout sighted a torpedo track and the order was given "full speed ahead both". The instruction came too late. HMS *Cressy* was hit forward on the starboard side, and lurched high enough out of the water that a second torpedo passed under her stern. The cruiser's guns briefly fired on the U-boat's periscope but to no effect.

Ten minutes later, *U-9* fired another torpedo and hit the cruiser on the port beam, rupturing tanks in the boiler room and scalding men nearby. HMS *Cressy* rolled to her starboard side, paused, then went bottom up with her starboard propeller out of the water. She remained in this position for a number of minutes (accounts vary between fifteen and twenty), finally sinking 07.55 hours.

Unfortunately for *Cressy*, her boats had been sent to pick up survivors from the other two ships, and returned already loaded with men. In a desperate struggle for survival, as many as five men clung to a single life vest, and a dozen men to a single plank of wood.

One of the survivors was First Class Stoker Reginald Atkins, who had been on board HMS *Aboukir*: "Having had the middle watch in the stokehold," he recalled, "I had bathed and turned into my hammock, and was soon in the land of dreams ... when I was awakened by a terrible bang. I was not long in realising that it was either a mine or torpedo, as the ship began to heel over to port, and the fumes from the gun cotton were choking ...

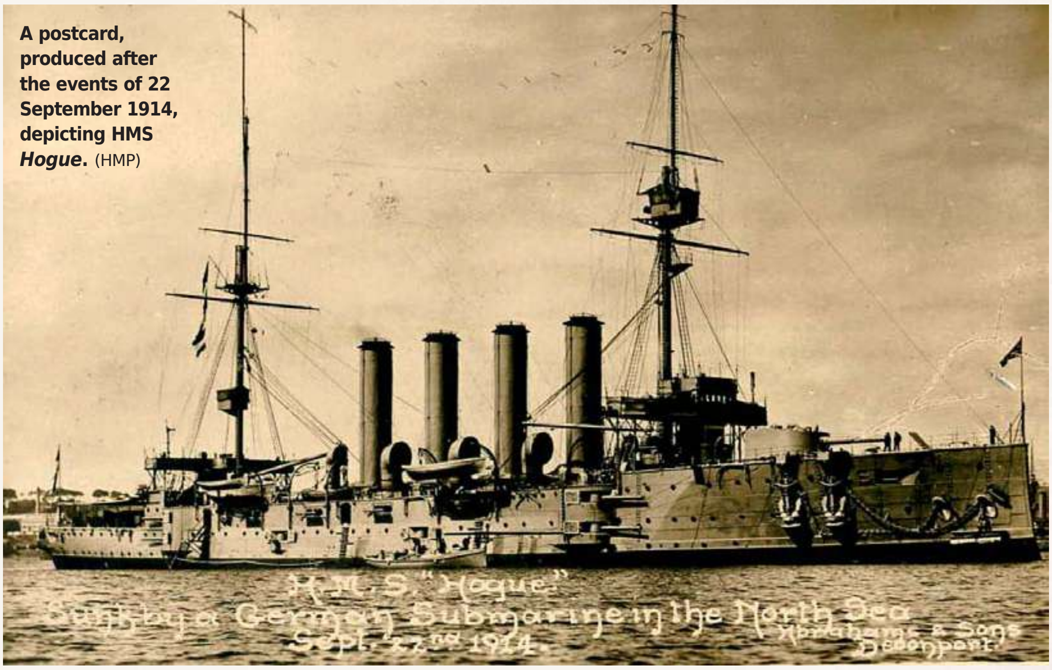
"The other two ships were then some three miles away, one on either side of us, and seeing we were in danger, the others promptly closed in and started to send boats. When the Captain saw the ship was doomed he said quite coolly, 'Men, the ship is sinking; do the best you can for yourselves'.

"When the ship was on her side I with several more ran along the bilge keel and jumped into the sea at the stern, clear of the struggling mass of humanity, and then struck out towards the *Hogue*, which ship a few of the men had already reached. I had not got very far when there were some more bangs.

"I knew then that the *Hogue* also had been struck, as great clouds of smoke came from her funnels and soot began to fall about us. I then changed my course to the *Cressy* and was making good progress when she was struck. I thought all chance of being saved was gone, as the boats round about me were already full." Atkins, however, managed to find an upturned boat to which he and a few other men clung until rescued by the Dutch steamer *Flora*.

Almost 1,500 men on the three ships lost their lives in the diaster, many of them reservists. Merchant ships and trawlers which went to the rescue ensured that 837 sailors survived. A subsequent court of enquiry blamed a number of officers for the losses, citing poor orders and a failure to zigzag as being among the reasons that led to the sinkings. However, much blame was also attached to the Admiralty for continuing with the patrols despite their limited value and the danger involved (they ceased after the loss of *Cressy*, *Aboukir* and *Hogue*).

On hearing of the losses the future First Sea Lord Dudley Pound made the following entry in his diary: "Much as one regrets the loss of life one cannot help thinking that it is a useful warning to us – we had almost begun to consider the German submarines as no good and our awakening which had to come sooner or later and it might have been accompanied by the loss of some of our Battle Fleet." ●

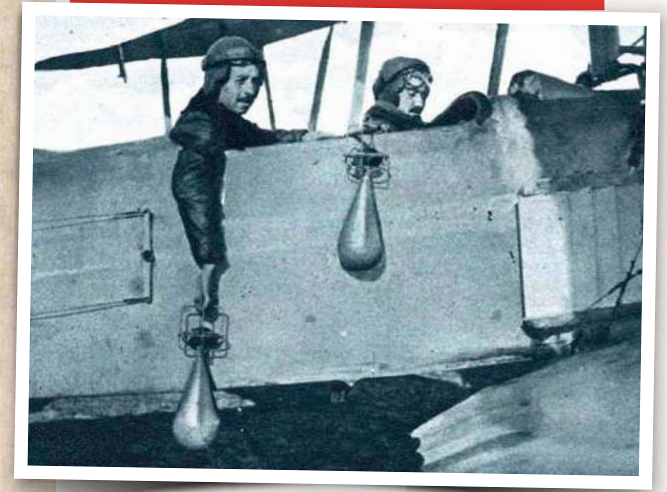


A postcard, produced after the events of 22 September 1914, depicting HMS *Hogue*. (HMP)

THE FIRST ZEPPELIN SHED RAID

22 SEPTEMBER 1914

ABOVE: **The target for Major Eugene Gerrard and Flight Lieutenant Charles Collet – the Zeppelin shed at Düsseldorf.** (ALL HMP)



ABOVE: **The method of aerial bombing that would have been employed by the RNAS aircraft over their targets.**

AT THE outbreak of war, a major source of concern for the British Government had been the potential threat of air attack posed by German airships. Each enemy airship in service in 1914 had a range of approximately 1,300 miles and could carry a bomb load of over 20,000lb. Flying from their bases in Germany, they could approach the British coast virtually undetected.

Such was the level of concern, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, advocated attacking the Zeppelin bases at both Düsseldorf and Cologne. Under the plan which was devised, permission was sought from the French authorities to base Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) aircraft at Dunkirk to enable them to launch an attack. The RNAS detachment consisted of aircraft from Nos.1, 2 and 3 squadrons. In due course, however, the aircraft moved to Antwerp which was located 102 miles from Düsseldorf and 112 miles from Cologne. It was from there that the attack was ultimately made.

An initial attempt to bomb both Düsseldorf and Cologne was made on 3 September 1914. This mission, however, was foiled by bad weather which damaged the aircraft that were to have taken part.

The second attempt was made on 22 September 1914. Two aircraft from No.1 Squadron RNAS, those flown by Major Eugene Gerrard and Flight Lieutenant Charles Collet, were detailed to attack Düsseldorf, whilst two aircraft from No.2 Squadron, these being flown by Lieutenant-Commander Spenser Grey and Flight Lieutenant Reginald Marix, were to target Cologne.

At daybreak on 22 September the four aircraft took off into clear skies. As they neared the target, the weather worsened with the ground covered by 100% cloud. This caused Gerrard, Grey and Marix to abort the mission and return to base.

Collet, however, had been flying on a compass bearing to the target and was above the cloud at an altitude of 6,000 feet. Reaching a point where he believed he must be close to the Zeppelin sheds, he switched off his engine and began a gliding descent.

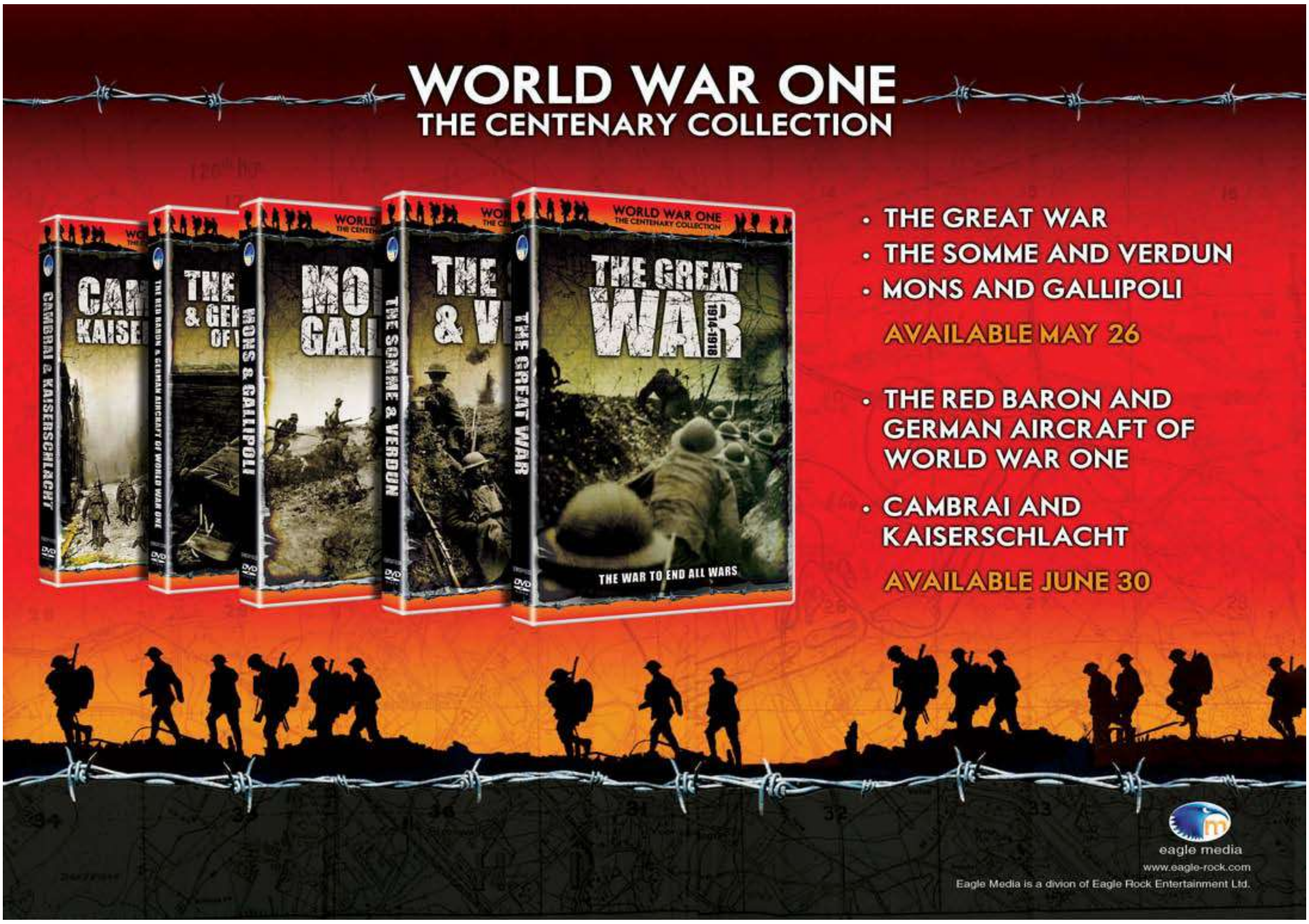
Breaking through the cloud at 400 feet, Collet spotted his target – remarkably it was barely a quarter of a mile away.

Re-starting his engine, Collet accelerated to the maximum speed of 65mph and headed for the Zeppelin shed. The Germans, taken by complete surprise, had not put in place air defences, and could only fire at Collet's aircraft with rifles.

Collet released his three bombs as he flew over the target. Though they were dropped with what *The London Gazette* described as "deadly precision", one exploded 100 feet short, another landed sixty-five short of the target and failed to explode, whilst the last also missed and failed to explode. Collet then proceeded to head home and joined the other raiders who had also successfully landed back at Antwerp.

Whilst the attack had failed to damage either the Zeppelin shed or any airship, news of the bombing raid proved a propaganda boost for the Allies. Other raids would follow in the months and years that followed. ●

BELOW: **Flight Lieutenant Charles Collet pictured in the cockpit of his aircraft. For his part in the attack on 22 September 1914, Collet was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.**



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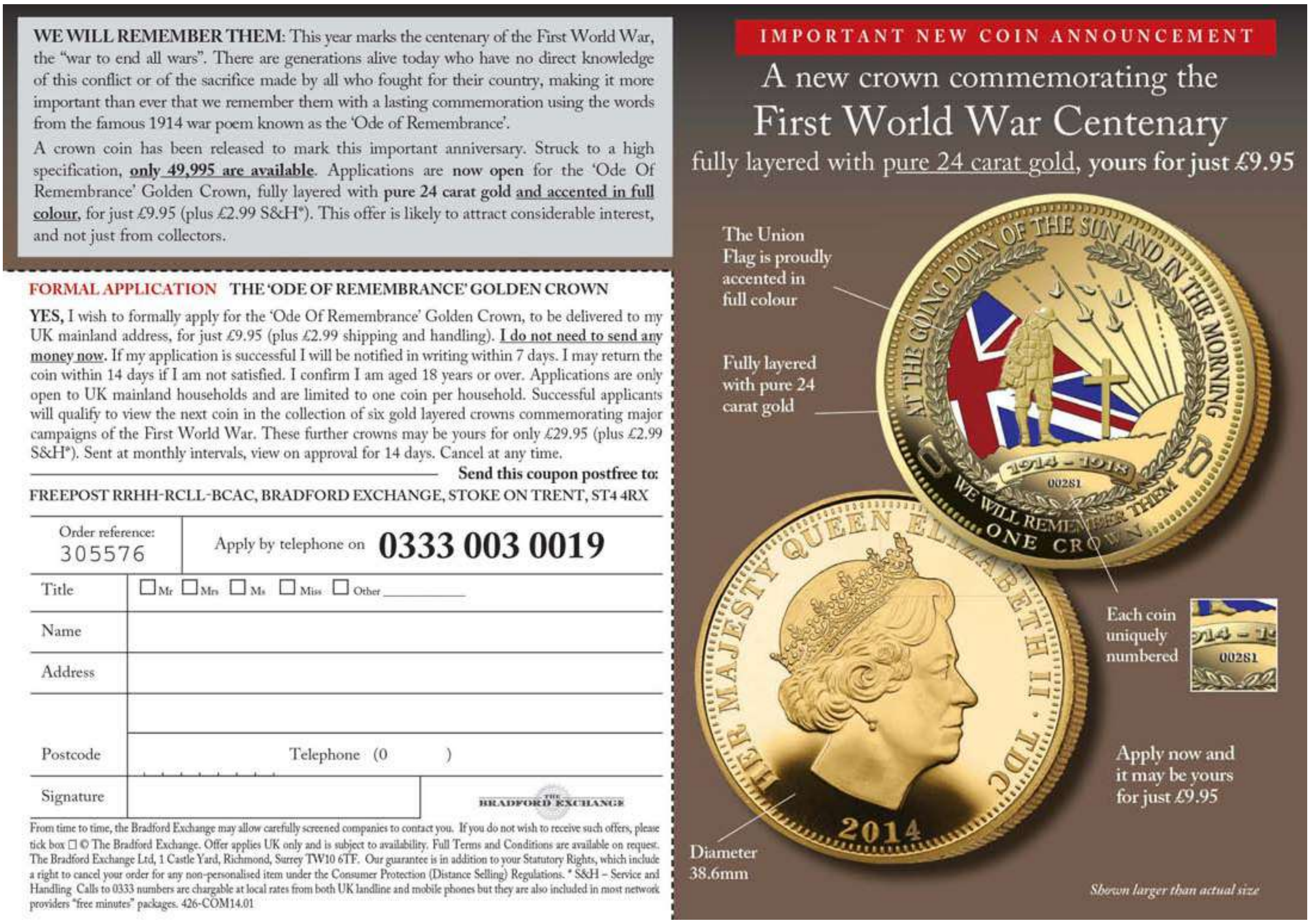

IMPORTANT NEW COIN ANNOUNCEMENT

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SIEGE AT TSINGTAO

23 SEPTEMBER 1914

ABOVE: **A group of South Wales Borderers in their trenches on Shiboshan Ridge during the siege. This photograph was probably taken during October 1914.** (THE MUSEUMS OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF WALES)

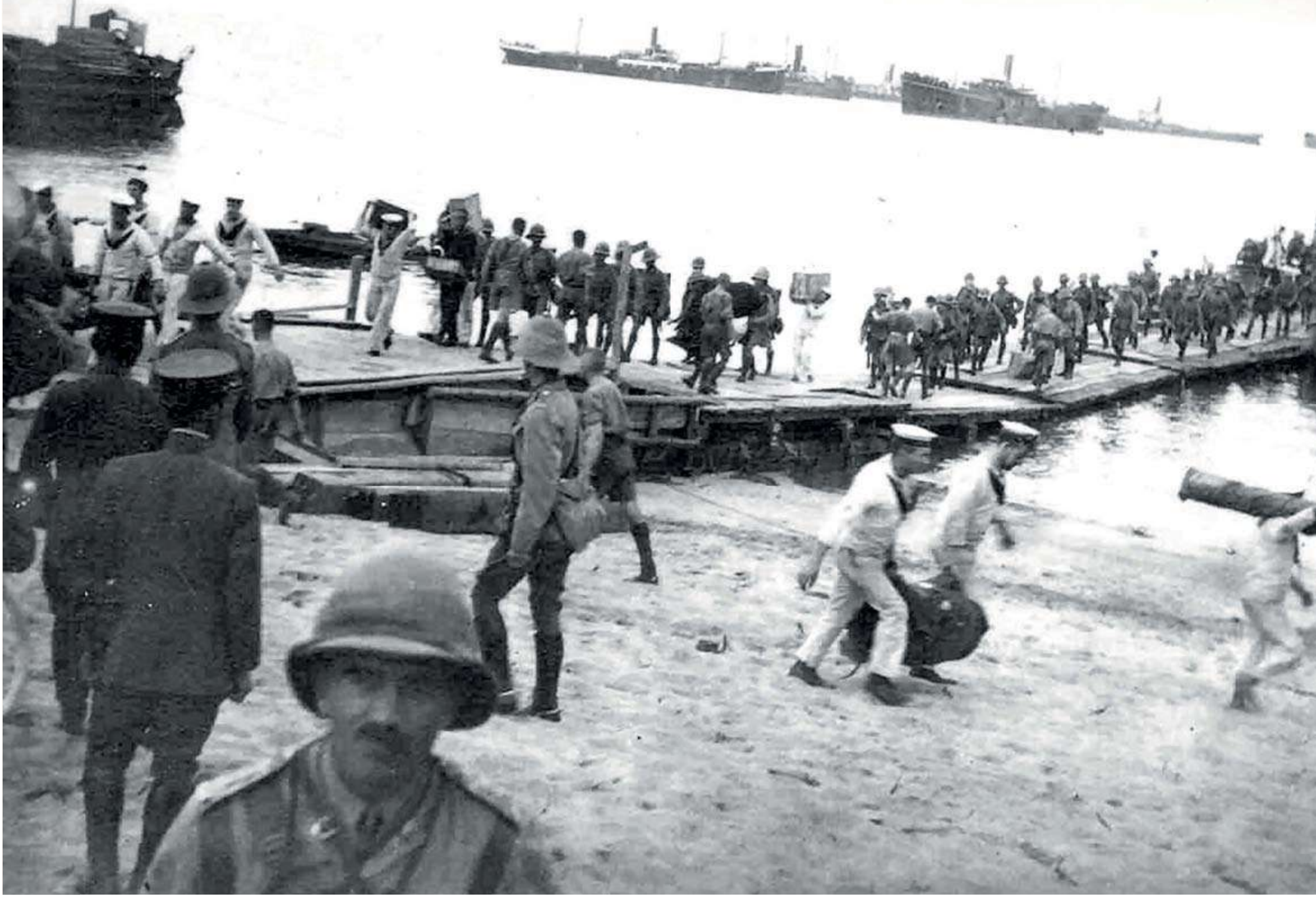
RIGHT: **The men of The South Wales Borderers arrive at Laoshan Bay on 24 September 1914. The original caption notes that "the British soldiers wearing shorts" are attracting "the noticeable interest of their Japanese allies".** (HMP)

BELOW: **The British landing at Laoshan Bay on 23 September, 1914. Note the large number of ships in the bay and the white clad navy personnel giving a helping hand.** (THE MUSEUMS OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF WALES)

BRITISH INVOLVEMENT in China was, by the start of the First World War, long established. There had been trading links with the Chinese Empire for over two centuries and the British were established in a number of ports throughout China.

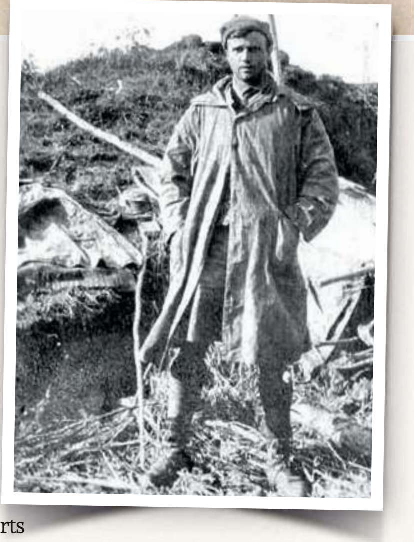
By 1914 there was regular presence of foreign soldiers in Beijing where they acted as Legation Guards in that city. Britain also had a presence in Tientsin and Weihaiwei in Shandong Province. In 1914 the 2nd Battalion, The South Wales Borderers was the British Legation Guard with two companies in Beijing and a further two at Tientsin.

The Germans too had an interest in Shandong province – the concession of Kiaochou Bay with its town of Tsingtao (modern spelling of Qingdao). The port was an important naval base, so the British turned to the Japanese for assistance in blockading it. The Japanese, who had also been looking to gain a foothold in China, readily agreed and by the beginning of September 1914 had a military force 40,000 strong on Chinese soil. The Officer Commanding North China, Brigadier-General N.W. Barnardiston, was, in turn, only allocated the 2nd Battalion The South Wales Borderers and a half battalion of the 36th Sikhs.



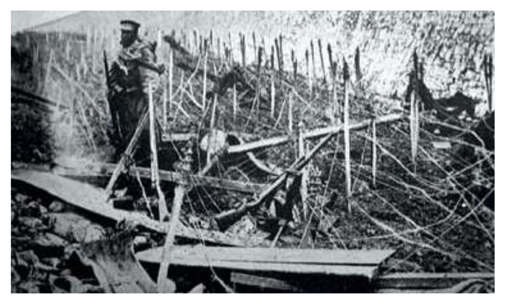
The campaign for the British started on 23 September 1914, when the South Wales Borderers were landed at Laoshan Bay. From there, they marched towards Tsingtao. The operation was initially unopposed by the Germans, the landing site being forty miles away from the town.

Though often referred to as the Battle of Tsingtao, it was essentially a siege and the Japanese brought up big guns (eventually amounting to 100 siege guns with 1,200 shells each) to shell the German defences. These included a number of large forts and an outer redoubt line of trenches.



LEFT: An officer of the South Wales Borderers at Tsingtao wearing an example of the Japanese-style smocks which were issued to the British troops to aid identification and prevent "friendly-fire" incidents. The officer is thought to be Lieutenant Courtland T.R. MacGregor who was killed at Gallipoli on 5 May 1915. (THE MUSEUMS OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF WALES)

BELOW: A Japanese soldier stands beside the remains of the wire entanglements in front of the first German defence line at Tsingtao. At an early stage of the siege, British and Japanese shelling targeted and destroyed much of these German barbed-wire defences. (HMP)



The small British force came under the overall control of the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Kamio, and he placed the Borderers near to the right of his line where, like the Japanese troops, they began digging parallel lines of trenches. The subsequent events of the siege, which began on 31 October, were later described by Brigadier-General N.W. Barnardiston:

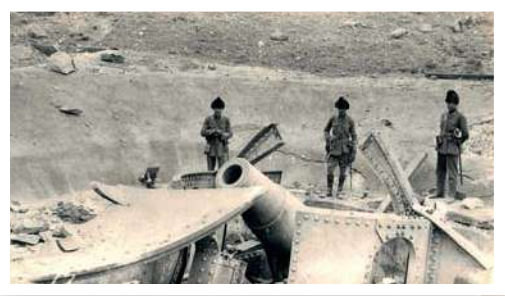
"The bombardment commenced on the 31st, the enemy not replying to any great extent. During the first day some oil tanks and coal stores near the dockyard were burnt, and the forts and redoubts suffered severely. Throughout the bombardment the practice of the Japanese artillery was surprisingly good, and the accuracy of' their fire and their numerical superiority in guns no doubt proved the principal factor in compelling the enemy's surrender. It is stated that the Germans expended all their gun ammunition. The bombardment continued with slight intermissions until the fall of the place.

"On the 1st November the First Position of attack was occupied, and the preparation of the Second Position commenced. This position was ready for occupation on the 3rd instant, but, owing to its location in the immediate vicinity of the bed of the river, it was impossible to drain it or to occupy it permanently, and as it was everywhere under close infantry fire from the First Position, I merely held it during the night with piquets."

By 5 November, as Allied pressure on the German garrison mounted, Barnardiston was ordered to prepare a third position of attack on the left bank of the river. Exposed to German fire, Barnardiston reported to the "Japanese Commander-in-Chief the untenable nature, for permanent occupation, of the portion of the Third Position in my front". In reply, Barnardiston was told "that it was necessary for it to be held in order to fit in with the general scheme of assault".

"On the evening of the 6th, accordingly, I occupied it with piquets ... During the night, on hearing rumours of the evacuation of one or more of the redoubts, I sent out officer's patrols to ascertain if the enemy were still holding the trenches in front of us, and prepared to advance should the front be clear. They were met, however, with rifles and machine-gun fire, and reported that No.2 Redoubt, on our left, was still held ... At 7a.m. [on 7 November] all firing ceased, and I was informed that the enemy had sent out a flag of truce. About 7.30a.m. I received orders to advance, and the enemy, along the whole of our front, having then retired, I marched into Tsingtao."

Japanese casualties during the siege numbered 236 killed and 1,282 wounded; twelve British soldiers had been killed and fifty-three wounded. The German defenders suffered 199 dead and 504 wounded. Within days of the surrender of the German garrison, the 2nd South Wales Borderers was on its way home. On 4 December 1914, the battalion embarked onto troopships at Hong Kong for the voyage back to Britain. ●



ABOVE: Three officers of the South Wales Borderers inspect the effects of the Japanese siege on a German gun position – possibly in Bismarck Fort. (THE MUSEUMS OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF WALES)

THE COMMANDERS' PRAISE

FOLLOWING THE capture of Tsingtao, the Emperor of Japan sent a message to the British force saying that he deeply appreciated "the brilliant deeds of the British Army and Navy co-operating with the Japanese".

In his telegram to the Japanese Minister of War, Lord Kitchener said: "Please accept my warmest congratulations on the success of the operations against Tsingtao. Will you be so kind as to express my felicitations to the Japanese forces engaged? The British Army is proud to have been associated with its gallant Japanese comrades in this enterprise."

THE INDIAN CORPS ARRIVES IN FRANCE

26 SEPTEMBER 1914

Indian troops heading for the front soon after their arrival in France. (HMP)

ABOVE: An Indian soldier cooking in France. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

AT THE outbreak of war the Indian Army numbered more than 280,000 men. This was made up of 204,794 Indian and 76,953 British troops and consisted of infantry and cavalry regiments, along with artillery and supporting units. The rank and file was made up of long-serving professional soldiers with British officers in command. Another layer of command was occupied by Indian officers known as "Viceroy Commissioned Officers". These were soldiers who were promoted from those with good service records, who spoke reasonably fluent English, and could act as a common liaison point between officers and men.

The mix of units serving on the Indian sub-continent was made up of a large number of Indian units alongside regular British Army battalions and other regular army units. In addition, twenty-seven of the largest and richest native states, under the command of their respective rulers, also maintained their own private armed forces which when mobilised could provide an extra 22,000 troops.

At a War Council meeting on 6 August 1914, Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, approved the mobilization of the Indian Army. Following this, the decision was made to deploy the 3rd and 7th Indian divisions – re-named the Lahore and Meerut divisions – to Europe.

On 8 August, the commanders of the Lahore Division (located in Northern India, now Pakistan) and the Meerut Division (located in central northern India) received their mobilization orders. The troops made their way to their various base camps where they formed up, following which they sailed from Karachi and Bombay in early September.

Travelling via the Suez Canal, the first ships arrived at the French port of Marseilles on the morning of Saturday, 26 September 1914. A contemporary newspaper account describes their arrival:

"The landing of the Indian Army at Marseille was a moving sight indeed, as ship after ship of the great fleet of transports landed its complement of troops. It was a proud and historic moment for the Allies and Indians with the native at the head of thousands of splendid men, rode through the streets of Marseilles to the strains of 'The Marseillaise'.

"For the first time in history Indian troops set foot on European soil, and their welcome was enthusiastic beyond description. Men and women shook the soldiers by the hand while young girls heaped flowers and ribbons on them. The French soldiers heartily greeted their comrades in arms, while the spectators cleared the pavements giving them over to the troops."

The first troop ships to berth at Marseilles were *Mongara* and *Castilia*. They carried between them a battery of Royal Horse Artillery, a Signal Company, a Field Ambulance, and part of a Mule Corps, the first of many thousands of men to arrive from the Indian sub-continent who would go on to serve on the Western Front. ●

ABOVE: Indian soldiers at a camp in France during the latter months of 1914. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

28 SEPTEMBER 1914

BOMBARDMENT OF ANTWERP

ABOVE: Belgian troops manning a field gun during the siege of Antwerp. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE BELGIAN Army continued its resistance during the first two weeks of August but was compelled to fall back under unrelenting German pressure. The Belgian field army was ordered to retreat on 18 August to the National Redoubt of Antwerp where the King and the Belgian Government had moved following the fall of Brussels. The Belgian troops arrived there two days later and took up defensive positions to await the inevitable German assault.

The Belgians had begun fortifying Antwerp, the country's most important port, since the 1850s. As artillery became increasingly powerful and capable of firing greater distances, so the forts built around Antwerp were strengthened and built further away from the city itself. Despite these improvements, work on the last of which began in 1906, such was the pace of ordnance development the largest of the German guns could bombard the Antwerp forts from a distance that the fixed Belgian guns could not reach. Antwerp might prove a hard nut for the Germans to crack, but crack it inevitably would.

Though the Germans moved up to Antwerp in August, their efforts were concentrated upon driving into France. It was not until September that the Germans turned their attentions to destroying the Belgian National Redoubt.

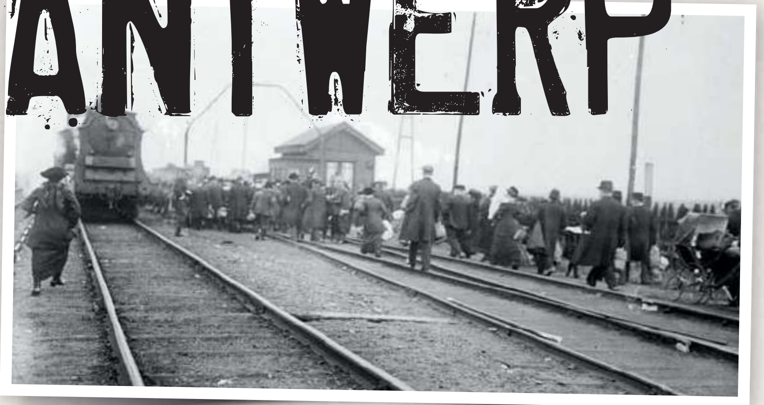
The man given the task of taking Antwerp was Generaloberst von Beseler. He had under his command some 120,000 men, whereas the troops within the National Redoubt, including the garrison and the field army, amounted to approximately 145,000. Von Beseler, on the other hand, possessed four 42cm, as well as four 30.5cm, guns. These could fire accurately up to nine miles, whereas the biggest Belgian guns had a maximum range of five or six miles.

The bombardment began on 28 September 1914, the German guns being directed by observers in fixed balloons. By the evening of the 29th, two of the Belgian forts had been reduced to rubble, and on the 30th the dam holding the huge reservoir that supplied the city with water was ruptured and water flooded the defenders' trenches.

The city was in dire straits and on 2 October arrangements were made to evacuate it. In a desperate bid to encourage the Belgians to fight on, Winston Churchill travelled to Antwerp on 3 October. Though the Belgians were anxious to retreat whilst such a move was still open to them, Churchill promised the help of British troops to reinforce the garrison.

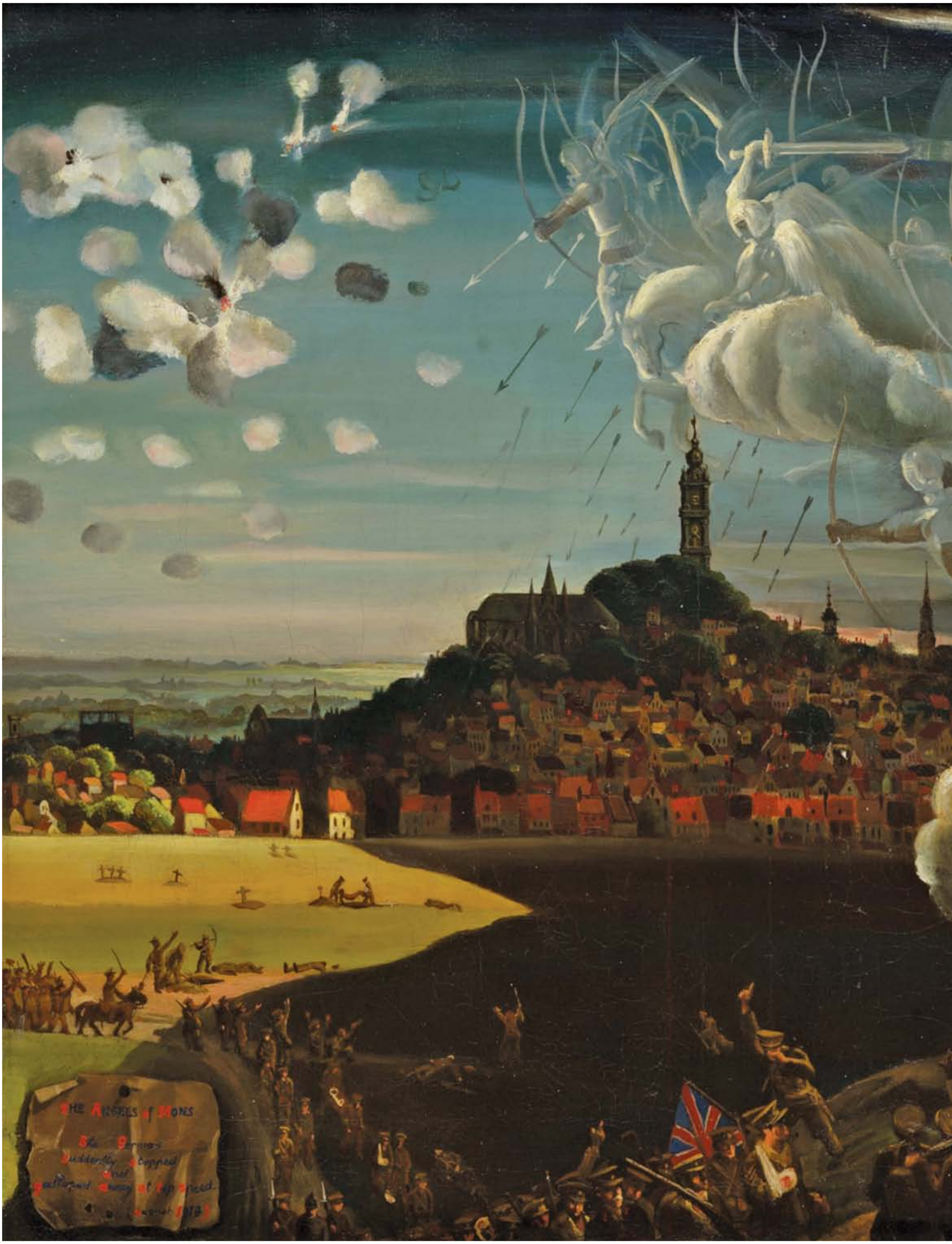
On the 4th the first of the reinforcements arrived in the form of the Royal Naval Division. The situation in Antwerp was deteriorating hourly and even though more British and French troops were on their way, the decision was taken on 6 October to evacuate and try to save the Belgian Army. The Belgian Government left Antwerp the following day, as did 250,000 civilians who blocked every road.

On 9 October, Antwerp capitulated. Around 30,000 Belgian soldiers were taken prisoner with a further 33,000 escaping to the Netherlands where they were interred for the remainder of the war. More than 2,000 British troops were also captured. ●



LEFT: Royal Navy ratings, part of the Naval Brigade sent to Antwerp, in trenches dug for the defence of Antwerp. (HMP)

FAR LEFT: Refugees fleeing Antwerp in anticipation of its capture by the German Army are pictured here walking along the main railway line towards the Dutch border. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)


THE ANGELS of MONS
The Horses
suddenly stopped
and
galloped away at top speed.
August 1914

THE ANGELS OF MONS

29 SEPTEMBER 1914

ONE OF the most enduring myths of the First World War is that of the heavenly figures that appeared during the retreat from Mons who, seemingly, drove off German troops who were about to engulf what was described as a 'salient'. Taking the form of archers – presumed to be ghosts of the renowned bowmen of England who had so decisively won the Battle of Agincourt – their arrows killed the Germans in their thousands.

The story of the angels was actually a piece of pure fiction from the pen of a Welsh horror and fantasy writer called Arthur Machen. It was published in London's *The Evening News* on 29 September 1914, just over a month after the supposed incident.

Machen, as he later said, had been thinking about the retreat and how to portray it. "So I took these thoughts with me to church," he later recalled, "and, I am sorry to say, was making up a story in my head while the deacon was singing the Gospel".

In the story, published as "The Bowmen", Machen wrote: "Beyond the trench, a long line of shapes, with a shining about them. They were like men who drew the bow, and with another shout their cloud of arrows flew singing and tingling through the air towards the German hosts.

"'Look, a man cried to one of his mates ... 'D'ye see them? They're not going down in dozens, nor in 'undreds; it's thousands, it is. Look! look! There's a regiment gone while I'm talking to ye' ... The singing arrows fled so swift and thick that they darkened the air; the heathen horde melted from before them."

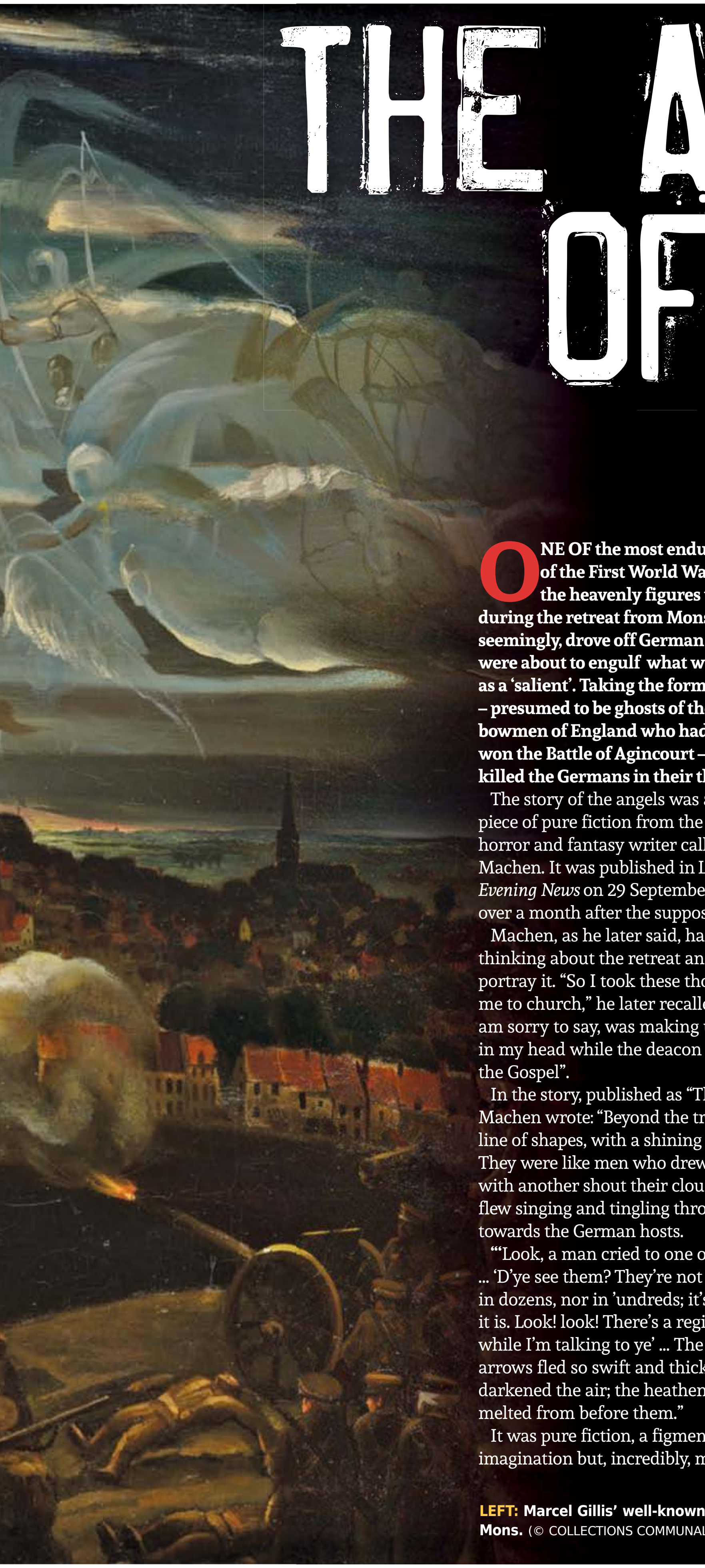
It was pure fiction, a figment of Machen's imagination but, incredibly, many people believed it. Over the course of the following months soldiers claimed to have spoken to men that had seen the angels. The stories circulated wildly, continuously being embellished. The more the story was repeated, the more it was believed.

Actual eye-witnesses, though, were hard to come by. Yet so entrenched in people's minds had the story become that one soldier, a Private Robert Cleaver of the 1st Battalion Cheshire Regiment, even swore an affidavit in front of a Justice of the Peace, stating that he personally saw the angels. Further investigation, however, showed that he had not even been on the Continent at the time.

On 5 September 1914, more than three weeks before Arthur Machen's story was published, Brigadier-General John Charteris wrote the following in a letter: "Then there is the story of the 'Angels of Mons' going strong through the 2nd Corps, of how the angel of the Lord on the traditional white horse, and clad all in white with flaming sword, faced the advancing Germans at Mons and forbade their further progress. Men's nerves and imagination play weird pranks in these strenuous times. All the same the angel at Mons interests me. I cannot find out how the legend arose."

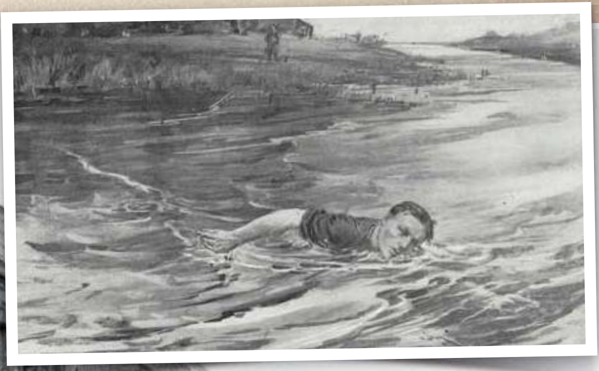
Despite Arthur Machen feeling obliged to go into print to state "that the tale is mere and sheer invention; that I made it all up out of my own head," the stories simply would not go away. These tales will be found in many a book and film, even in the twentieth century.

People are often drawn to the superstitious, the unworldly, but in this instance, as Machen wrote, "there was not one word of truth in it". ●



LEFT: Marcel Gillis' well-known painting depicting the Angels of Mons. (© COLLECTIONS COMMUNALES DE LA VILLE DE MONS)

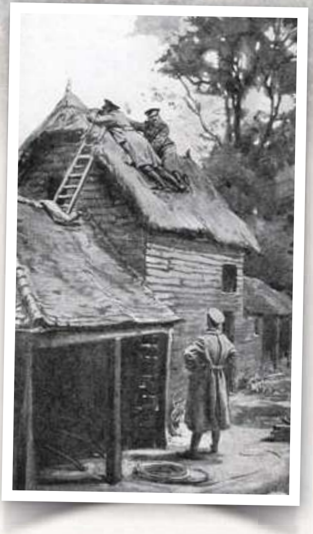
MAIN PICTURE: **Regimental transport at or near Armentières in 1914.** (MARY EVANS/ROBERT HUNT COLLECTION)



RIGHT and BELOW RIGHT: **On 18 October 1914, Bombardier George King was detailed to act as telephone operator to the major of his battery – the 126th Battery, Royal Field Artillery – who was observing from the roof of a barn (left). The battery had received orders to support the 10th Infantry Brigade in an attack on the German line. The major discovered that the only way to establish communication with the advanced trenches was to have a wire carried across the river Lys, which separated them from the observing station. King at once offered to swim the river, carrying the wire with him. Having successfully tackled the fast-flowing water, King then swam back to the barn to resume his duties. Bombardier King was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal "for conspicuous enterprise".** (HMP)

13 OCTOBER 1914

THE BATTLE OF ARMENTIÈRES



THE BELGIAN Army, overwhelmed by the advance of the Germans, had withdrawn into their National Redoubt of Antwerp. With help from two Royal Naval Brigades and a brigade of Royal Marines, Antwerp held out for almost two weeks, considerably slowing the progress of the German forces and disrupting the timetable of the Schlieffen Plan.

With the fall of Antwerp, the Germans were back on the move but with the Allied armies blocking a direct move on Paris an alternative plan was needed. The only possible avenue of advance for the Germans was to the left (or north) of the Allied forces. As the British Expeditionary Force was already posted on the left of the Allied line, it was decided to transfer every man to hold back the Germans. The BEF was directed to move eastward from Saint-Omer. The French armies south of Annequin were to operate similarly eastward, keeping pace with the British troops on their left.

As the British troops moved north-eastwards, on 11 October 1914, they encountered the enemy holding a wood to the north of the Béthune-Aire Canal. The Germans were driven out of the wood by the 2nd Cavalry Division, allowing II Corps to cross the canal. General Smith-Dorrien was then instructed to threaten the German right flank and prevent them from reaching La Bassée. Smith-Dorrien, however, found that the enemy was far stronger than had been anticipated. His advance was brought to a standstill, but so too had that of the enemy.

General Pulteney's III Corps was instructed to act on the left of II Corps. It reached Hazebrouck from Saint-Omer on 12 October and then proceeded to move in the direction of Armentières.

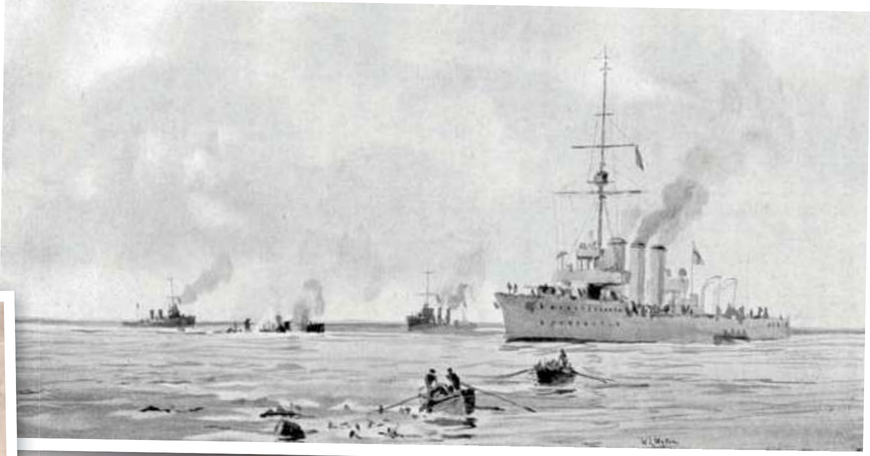
The next day III Corps found the Germans defending the line of a small stream, the Meterenbecque, from a strong position on a ridge behind the line. A request for help from the cavalry corps was refused as they were also engaged in battle, and so III Corps was forced to launch a frontal assault on the German lines. After a day long battle, which cost III Corps 708 casualties, the Germans pulled back.

The German advance had been halted, and though Pulteney was ordered to push further forward down the valley of the River Lys, the Germans were simply too strong. What became known as the Battle of Armentières continued officially until 2 November with the Germans repeatedly attempting to force II Corps' positions. The fighting cost Britain more than 5,000 men but the Germans were held. Whilst neither side could claim victory, the Germans had been halted in this area. It was still possible, however, for the Germans to reach the Channel coast and turn the Allied left flank. This was the last leg of what became known as the Race to the Sea; it was a race the BEF simply had to win. ●

ACTION OFF TEXEL

17 OCTOBER 1914

BELOW: **The last of the German torpedo boats sinks during the Battle off Texel as the crew of HMS *Undaunted* rescue survivors. An unexpected result of this naval engagement came on 30 November 1914, when a British fishing trawler working the area pulled up a sealed lead-lined chest that had been thrown off *S119* during the action so as to avoid its capture. When opened, the chest was found to contain a secret codebook normally used by Flag officers of the German Navy.** (HMP)



A torpedo boat similar to those used by the Germans at Texel.

THE BATTLE of Heligoland Bight had resulted in a disastrous defeat for the German fleet, particularly its cruisers. Consequently, its larger warships were instructed not to be drawn into a fight with the Royal Navy, which meant that the North Sea was effectively abandoned by the Imperial German Navy. Only the smaller craft and submarines ventured into the waters round the German coast.

Keeping an eye on the activities of these German ships was the Harwich Force. Under the command of Commodore (later Admiral of the Fleet) Sir Reginald Yorke Tyrwhitt, the Harwich Force consisted of between four and eight light cruisers, several flotilla leaders and usually between thirty and forty destroyers, with numbers fluctuating throughout the war.

The Harwich flotillas patrolled the North Sea intensively and 17 October 1914 was no exception. That day a routine patrol was being undertaken by the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla which consisted of the light cruiser HMS *Undaunted*, commanded by Captain Cecil Fox, and the destroyers *Loyal*, *Legion*, *Lance*, and *Lennox*.

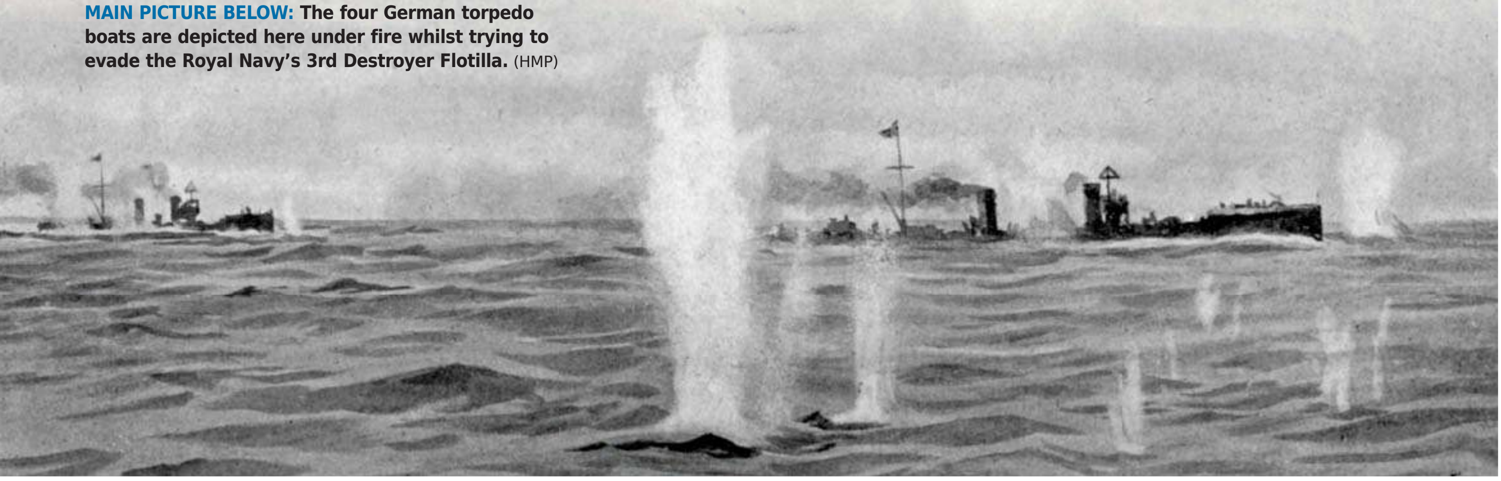
In the early afternoon, Fox and his ships were sailing some fifty miles from the Island of Texel off the coast of North Holland. At 13.50 hours a flotilla of four German torpedo boats was sighted. This was the 7th Half Flotilla from Ems under *Korvettenkapitän* George Thiele in *S119*. The German vessels were on a mission to lay mines off the southern coast of Britain, including the Thames estuary.

For reasons which do not seem to have been ascertained, the German vessels did not immediately try to escape or even challenge the approaching Royal Navy flotilla. It is possible that Thiele believed the British boats were reinforcements from Germany.

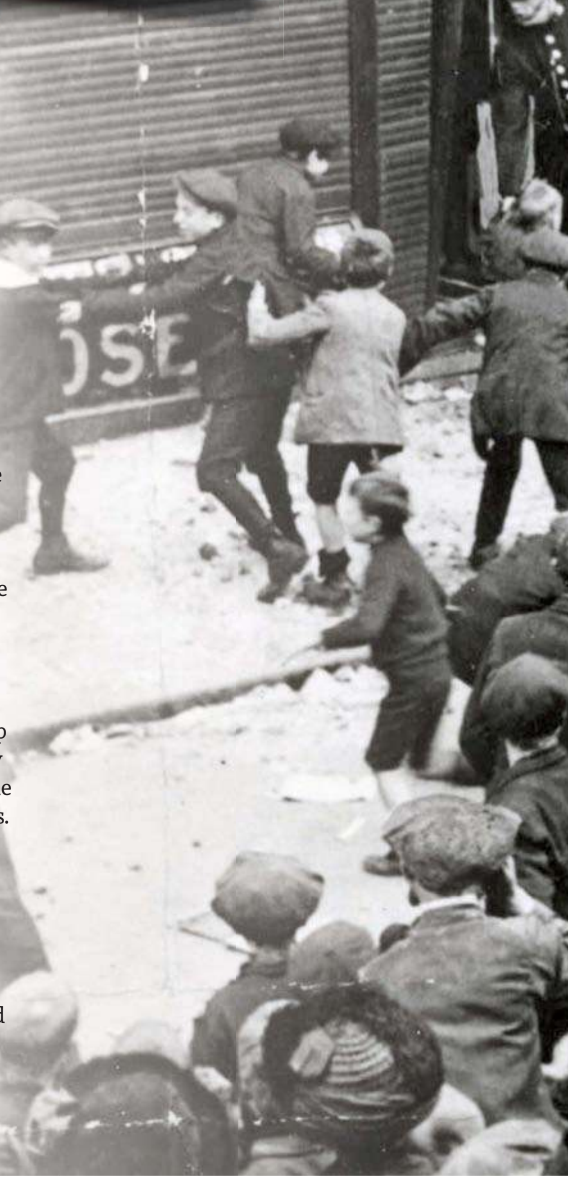
By the time that Thiele realised the approaching ships were British, it was too late. Though the German torpedo boats scattered, they were never going to be able to escape. These torpedo boats were armed with nothing greater than 5cm guns – they were utterly out-gunned. The *Lafore*-class destroyers carried 4-inch guns, whilst *Undaunted* was armed with 6-inch guns. The only danger the German boats posed was with their torpedoes.

By 14.00 hours the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla was within range of the fleeing torpedo boats. Firstly the two leading destroyers, *Lennox* and *Lance*, attacked and sank the leading enemy torpedo-boat. Then the destroyers, cutting in between the enemy ships, sank them in turn. During the action *Undaunted* kept outside effective torpedo range and engaged the enemy at long range, shelling whichever boat happened to be nearest to her at the time. By 15.20 hours all the German boats had been sunk. ●

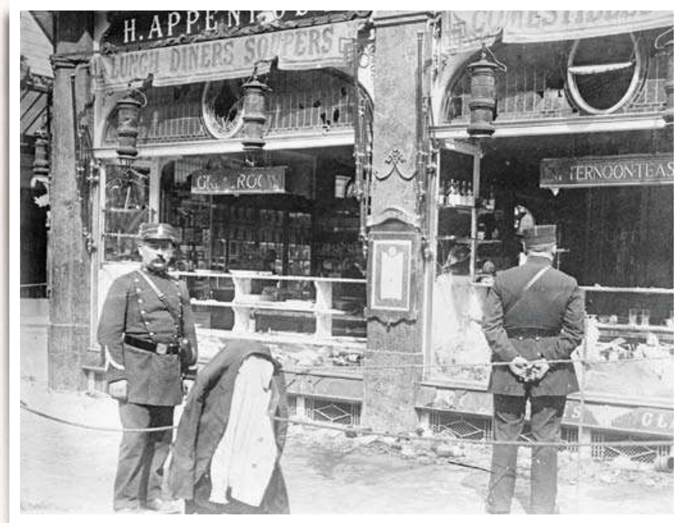
MAIN PICTURE BELOW: **The four German torpedo boats are depicted here under fire whilst trying to evade the Royal Navy's 3rd Destroyer Flotilla.** (HMP)



ANTI-GERMAN RIOTS



MAIN PICTURE: A shop, owned by an individual of German origin, is attacked by a mob in London's East End. (WW1IMAGES)



RIGHT: Anti-German sentiments revealed themselves in most Allied nations – as this picture of damage to a café in Paris illustrates. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

17 OCTOBER 1914

THE SEEMINGLY incontrovertible evidence of atrocities carried out by the German Army since the start of the First World War, often reported in lurid detail by the Britain's staunchly anti-German popular press, encouraged knee-jerk responses in many parts of the United Kingdom. Stories of German bakers putting arsenic into their bread, Germans dropping poison into reservoirs which supplied drinking water, and even one report of a vast store of arms having been discovered in a German-owned club, only served to exacerbate the situation and agitate the hysteria.

The first isolated attacks on German residents and businesses occurred as early as August 1914, with one larger riot occurring in Keighley, Yorkshire, at the end of the month. On 17 September 1914, New Scotland Yard felt compelled to write to the Home Office: "On the outbreak of war, much bitterness was shown by British residents towards German shopkeepers in Poplar. On the evening of 31st ultimo, two German bakers in Upper North Street invited trouble by making insulting remarks regarding the British people and troops, with the result that the windows of their shops were broken. This caused a crowd to assemble and a small body of urchins followed by the crowd proceeded to other shops occupied by German Subjects, the windows of which were also broken. Sufficient police having arrived, order was eventually restored."

More serious was the disorder that rippled through some of London's boroughs on 17 October. This time the police were unable to cope, the riots only being quelled following the deployment of troops.

One witness, Rudolf Rocker, described these events in his memoir: "In October mobs collected in the streets, in the Old Kent Road, in Deptford, Brixton, Poplar, and smashed and looted shops which they thought were occupied by Germans. These were real pogroms ... The police were helpless."

The following account of the trouble in Deptford on 17 October was printed, two days later, in the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*:

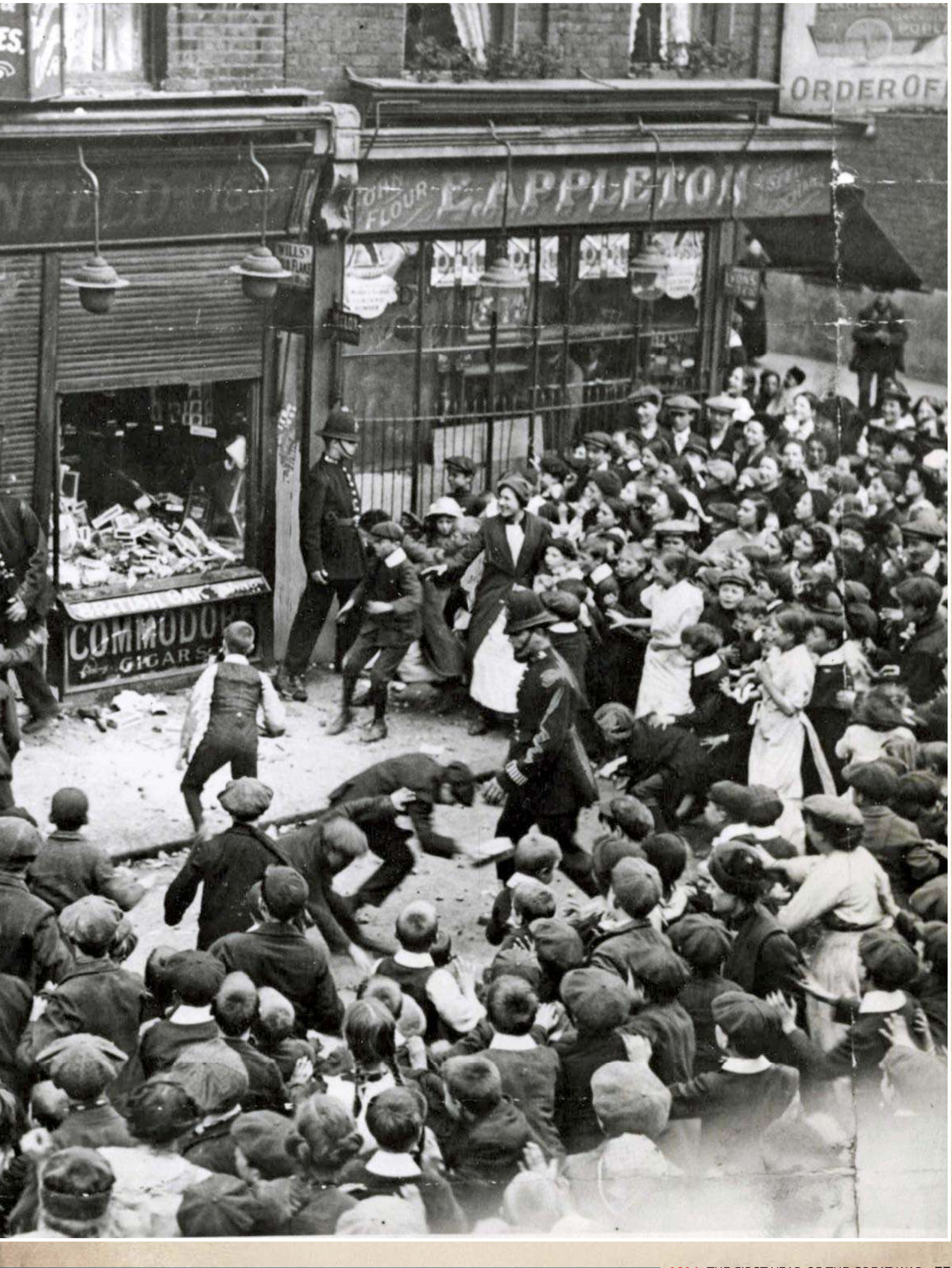
"Nine shops in High-street and Evelyn-road were attacked by a crowd largely reinforced by dockside labourers from Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. The rioting lasted from 10 o'clock to nearly 3 am. In that time shops were wrecked and looted, and in one case a shop was set on fire.

"In the face of a crowd numbering 5,000 the local police were helpless. Reinforcements were hurried up from the surrounding districts and in the end a force of 200 policemen, assisted by 350 men of the Army Service Corps, got the crowd thoroughly in hand ....

"The first place attacked was a butcher's shop kept by a German named F. Reigler. Before any violence took place, the crowd gathered outside the shop and prevented the entry of customers. Reigler shut the shop, and a moment later the hurling of a brick through the plate-glass window announced the opening of the riot."

Along with his family and three British employees, Reigler sought refuge in a neighbouring building. "A few minutes later," continued the newspaper report, "his shop and fittings had been reduced to wreckage".

Such events were, however, far from isolated and anti-German disorder continued intermittently throughout the remainder of the war. ●


ORDER OF
CORN FLOUR E. APPLETON
WILLS'
COMMODORE
GIGARS

FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

ABOVE: A series of obstructions which, planned by Second Lieutenant K. Dorner and made of fallen trees, were erected on a road near Ypres, October 1914. (HMP)

19 OCTOBER 1914

THE ADVANCE of the German 6th Army had been halted at Armentières but it was still possible for the German 4th Army to break through to the Channel coast and cut off the BEF from the ports through which its supplies travelled. The key to this was the city of Ypres which was a vital road and rail communications centre. If the Germans broke through there it could spell disaster for the Allies.

German cavalry had actually entered Ypres on 7 October 1914, but had pulled back. Soon, though, three cavalry corps and elements of the 6th Army moved westwards towards Ypres as the BEF marched eastwards. From 9 October the leading elements of the opposing forces met, with the ensuing battles costing some 4,500 men. Eventually, on 19 October, the Germans had concentrated all their strength and mounted a major attack through Menin.

General Rawlinson's IV Corps was also on the march. However, when the strength of the German attack became apparent, Rawlinson was told to hold his ground and cover the rest of the BEF which was still en route.

Throughout the previous night the Belgian population from Ypres and the surrounding area had abandoned their homes ahead of the German advance. By the morning of the 19th the roads were clear and IV Corps was able to

British troops entering Ypres on 13 October 1914. This is the Grand Place in Ypres – one end of the famous Cloth Hall can be seen on the left of this view. The men seen here are part of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, representing the first British troops that the people of Ypres encountered in the war. (WW1IMAGES)

A naval armoured car on the Menin Road at Hell-Fire Corner, 14 October 1914. (IWM; Q57194)

BELOW: The 2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment being transported by bus through Dickebusch on their way to Ypres, 6 November 1914. (HMP)

drop back unhindered to positions the men had prepared two days earlier. There they would make their stand.

Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton was in command of a brigade of Field Artillery at Zonnebeke to the north-east of Ypres: "We were on the crest of a small rise, and thirty or forty yards in front of us, on the forward slope, was the line of our infantry trenches, at that point held by the South Staffordshire Regiment. We had an excellent view of the country to our front, which much resembled Essex or Suffolk, being greatly enclosed and with many hedges and small woods.

"Standing in my trench with nothing but my eyes showing, I watched the enemy's infantry trickling over the skyline. They came into view at 3,400 yards, but they were in very open order and came on in short rushes; they did not present much of a target for artillery and, owing to the farms, woods and hedges, we could only see them here and there as they crossed open patches.

"The ridge they were crossing was under fire of our guns and whenever we saw enough of them bunched together, we let off a few rounds at them. I shall never forget seeing some thirty or forty Germans running across a green field which was divided in two by a wire fence probably barbed, as I noticed that on reaching the wire fence they all concentrated and ran through a gate in it. Our lines of fire were already laid out, and from the map we were able to get the range to a yard."

Hamilton arranged with the commander of the 106th Battery to fire on the next party that tried to pass through the gate. "Just before they reached the gate, he gave the order to fire. The guns, which were hidden behind us, loosed off and we heard the shells whining away. As the Germans clustered in the gate, a shell from No.1 gun burst immediately in front of them. The whole lot at once lay down, and at first I thought that they were taking cover until our fire stopped. However, I watched them for some hours and not one of them moved again." The weight of the German attack eventually told, and, after five days of fighting, Zonnebeke was taken and IV Corps pulled back to Ypres.

Haig's I Corps arrived to the north of Ypres just as the German Fourth Army attacked on 20 October. Haig's single corps, in new and unprepared positions, was opposed by five enemy corps. At Le Pilly, the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment was cut off and surrounded. The 2nd Battalion, Sherwood Foresters, likewise was cut off, much of the battalion being taken prisoner.

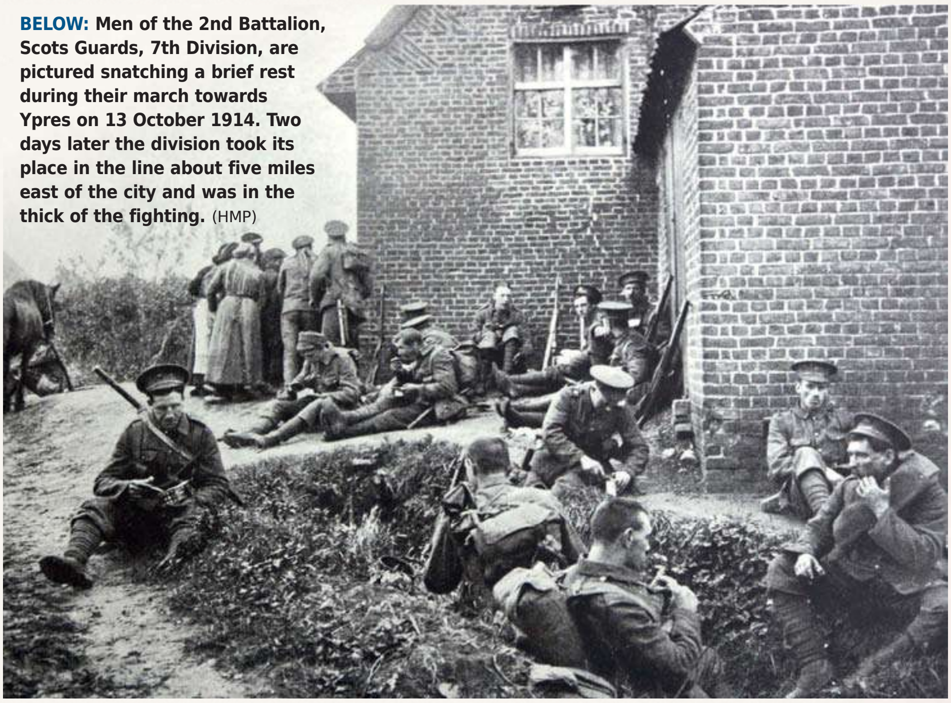
Despite these and other such early enemy successes, the fierce resistance put up by the BEF caused the Germans to believe that the British were well dug in at Ypres. Consequently, they failed to follow through with the determination that could well have seen them breakthrough the BEF's lines.

There were few more crucial periods in the First World War than the initial few days of the First Battle of Ypres. If the Germans had captured the city and reached the coast, there would be nothing to stop them rolling up the Allied flank, capturing the ports of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne and driving south towards Paris.

"No more arduous task has ever been assigned to British soldier," wrote Sir John French, "and in all their splendid history there is no instance of their having answered so magnificently to the desperate calls which of necessity were made upon them." Yet, with more German forces being committed to the attack, the result of the First Battle of Ypres still hung in the balance. ●

WARING & GILLOW
REMOVALS
WAREHOUSING
164-180, OXFORD St LONDON. W.

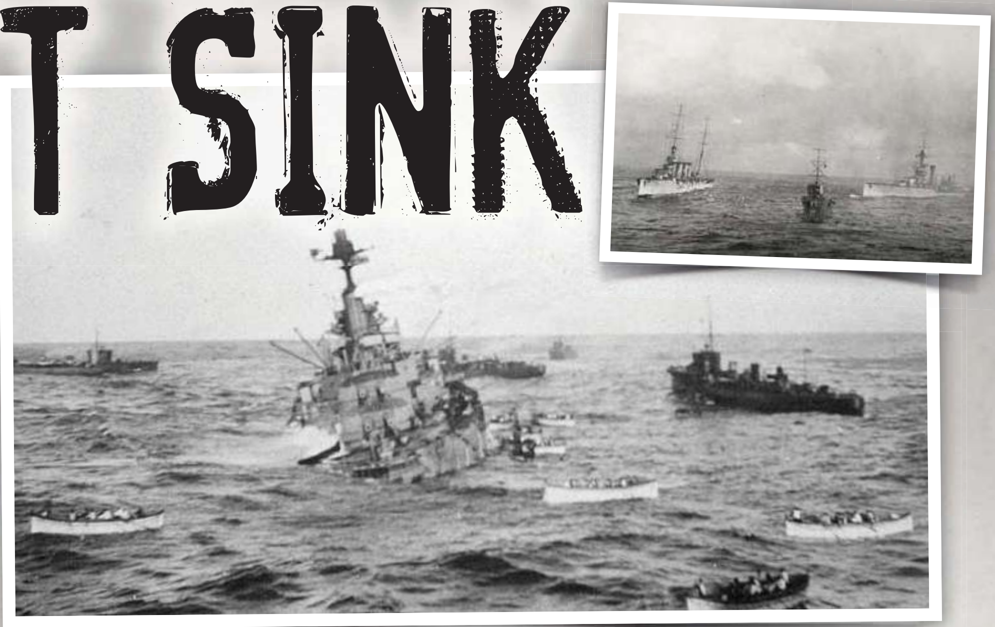
ABOVE: Commercially owned vehicles impressed for service with the BEF outside the Cloth Hall in Ypres, October 1914. (HMP)



BELOW: Men of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, 7th Division, are pictured snatching a brief rest during their march towards Ypres on 13 October 1914. Two days later the division took its place in the line about five miles east of the city and was in the thick of the fighting. (HMP)

THE SHIP THAT DIDN'T SINK

27 OCTOBER 1914



ABOVE and TOP RIGHT: **The rescue underway as HMS *Audacious* sinks on 27 October 1914.** (HMP)

SHE WAS a new Dreadnought, a mighty battleship and one of the most prized ships in the Royal Navy. Her loss to a mine in the first few weeks of the First World War would have been a great shock to the British people so. As a result, HMS *Audacious* was not officially lost in 1914 and her name remained on all public lists of ship movements until after the end of the war.

08.45 HOURS: STRUCK A MINE

Early on the morning of Tuesday, 27 October 1914, the Royal Navy's 2nd Battle Squadron departed Lough Swilly in County Donegal to undertake gunnery practice at Loch Na Keal. One of the warships involved was the battleship HMS *Audacious*. In the middle of a turn, at 08.45 hours, HMS *Audacious* struck a mine laid by the German auxiliary minelayer *Berlin* off Tory Island.

Wardroom steward Charles Pengelly was in the wardroom pantry preparing the meals for the day: "We were busy on the job, and getting along nicely – cleaning away dishes, packing glass in baize-lined cupboards, and having a joke or two – when, all of a sudden, about twenty to nine, there came a terrific crash. We were hurled off our feet, the wardroom table completely overturned, bottles, cups and saucers, plates, flew in all directions."

08.50 HOURS: SUBMARINE WARNING

The mine had exploded sixteen feet under HMS *Audacious*' hull, approximately ten feet forward of the transverse bulkhead at the rear of the port engine room. Flooding began immediately. Believing that his ship had been torpedoed, *Audacious*' commander, Captain Cecil F. Dampier, hoisted the submarine warning, with the result that the rest of the squadron steamed away from possible danger.

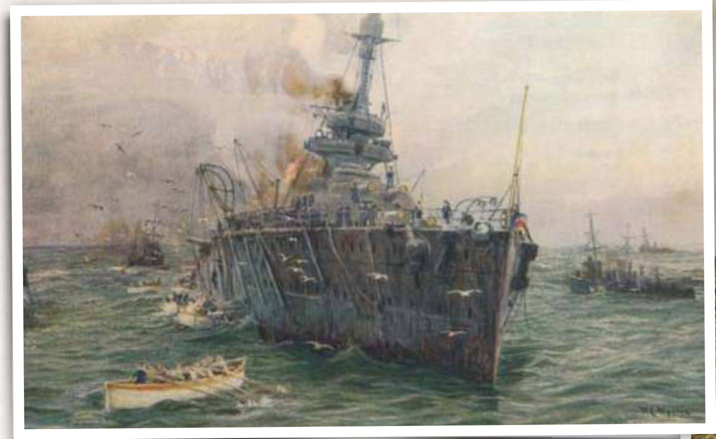
The crew of HMS *Audacious*, meanwhile, took to the lifeboats as the warship sank in the water some twenty miles north-east of Tory Island, off the coast of Co. Donegal, Ireland. At the time the mine exploded, HMS *Audacious* had been the third ship in line and a little off station as the squadron was about to alter course four points to starboard.

"By jove, what a sight she was when we came on the upper deck," continued Charles Pengelly. "Most of the ship's company was lined up already stripping off their spare clothing ... By this time the ship had a terrible list. The port deck was all awash aft, and what made our position seem worse, there wasn't another ship in sight; the other three ships of our squadron had made off."

13.30 HOURS: HELP IS AT HAND

Some three hours after *Audacious* hit the mine, rescue was at last at hand. As soon as he

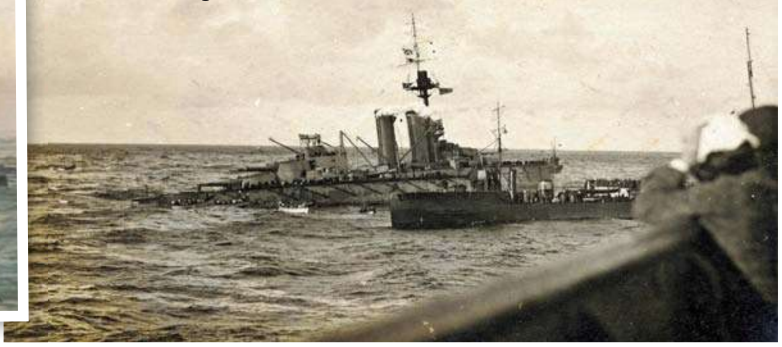
BELOW: **HMS *Audacious*.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



ABOVE: **W.L. Wyllie's painting depicting HMS *Audacious* sinking.** (HMP)

BELOW: **Passengers on the RMS *Olympic* (on the far right) watch the attempts to save the stricken HMS *Audacious*.** (HMP)

INSET BELOW: **HMS *Audacious*' 'A' and 'B' turrets, which are seen here in this view looking forward to her bow.**

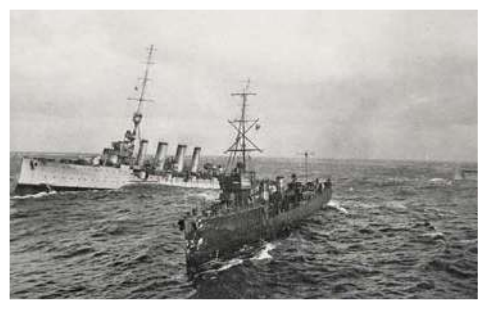


heard of the battleship's plight Admiral Jellicoe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, ordered every available destroyer and tug to go to its assistance.

"Everyone bucked up," continued Pengelly, "and by noon half-a-dozen torpedo boat destroyers were steaming around us. The first thing they did was to pump oil onto the water to try and steady the ship, as she was wallowing terribly at this time. Not long after this another big crash resounded through the ship. This turned out to be the bulkheads to the centre engine room giving way under the terrific pressure of water."

14.00 HOURS: HMS AUDACIOUS ABANDONED

In due course, HMS *Audacious* was taken under tow by HMS *Liverpool* and HMS *Fury*. By the time that the order was given to abandon ship, the battleship's "quarter deck was under water, the main decks awash, and [it had taken on] a most dangerous list to starboard".



ABOVE: **The destroyer HMS *Fury* (foreground) and HMS *Liverpool* attending the badly-damaged HMS *Audacious* (out of view to the right).** (HMP)

16.00 HOURS: EYEWITNESSES

By 16.00 hours, HMS *Audacious*' forward deck was only four feet above water, while the stern had no more than one foot of clearance. With darkness approaching, and despite the continuing efforts to take the battleship under tow, at 19.15 hours the remaining men on board – including Captain Dampier – were taken off.

20.45 HOURS: CAPSIZE

At 20.45 hours, with the decks underwater, HMS *Audacious* heeled sharply, paused, and then capsized. The great warship floated upside down with the bow raised until 21.00 hours, when an explosion occurred, throwing wreckage 300 feet into the air.

The explosion that finally sank HMS *Audacious*, and which was followed by two smaller ones, occurred in the vicinity of the forward magazines serving 'A' and 'B' turrets. It was believed to have been caused by high-explosive shells falling from their racks and exploding, then igniting cordite in the magazine. Within moments the great battleship sank stern first. Such was the scale of the explosion that although HMS *Liverpool* was standing a mile away, a large piece of debris landed on her deck.

Admiral Jellicoe urged the Board of the Admiralty not to announce the sinking of HMS *Audacious*. As there was no loss of life amongst the battleship's crew there would be no need to inform any next of kin so the entire incident could, therefore, be kept secret. Jellicoe felt that not only would public knowledge of the loss of such an important ship be damaging to morale but it would also show Britain's weakness at a time when the effectiveness of the German High Seas Fleet could not be gauged.

The Cabinet agreed and the incident was not disclosed to the public. For the rest of the war, therefore, HMS *Audacious*' name remained on all the public lists of ship movements and activities. There were, though, a number of Americans on board the RMS *Olympic* (which had arrived on the scene to assist) and unlike Royal Navy personnel they could not be gagged. Some of them had even taken photographs, and in one case some film footage. When they arrived in the United States, they recounted their experiences and the whole incident was subsequently reported in the American press.

ONLY ONE CASUALTY

Remarkably, the only fatal casualty during the entire incident was 30-year-old Petty Officer William Burgess. Serving on HMS *Liverpool*, Burgess was killed while standing on the deck of his own ship when he was hit by a 2ft by 3ft piece of armour plate from HMS *Audacious*.

A "DESPERATE DEPARTURE"

The war over, on 14 November 1918, the following notice was published in *The Times*: "The Secretary of the Admiralty makes the following announcement: HMS *Audacious* sank after striking a mine off the North Irish coast on October 27, 1914. This was kept secret at the urgent request of the Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, and the Press loyally refrained from giving it any publicity."

The decision to maintain a veil of secrecy of the loss of the battleship was explained thus in the *Official History of Naval Operations*: "[This] desperate departure from the time-honoured British practice which proved distasteful to public opinion, was sanctioned for high reasons of State". ●

ABOVE: **Petty Officer Burgess was buried in Lower Fahan (Christ Church) Churchyard in Buncrana, County Donegal. Buncrana was a British naval base on the shores of Loch Swilly during the First World War.** (COURTESY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION)

COUNTER-ATTACK AT GHELUVELT

29 OCTOBER 1914

ABOVE: **A memorial to the 2nd Worcesters that can be reached along a footpath leading from the information panel by the entrance to Gheluvelt Chateau.** (COURTESY OF PAUL REED)

WITH THE flooding of the ground between the River Yser and Belgium's North Sea Coast on 26 October 1914, the Allied left flank had been rendered secure. This also meant that the German right flank could not be attacked by the Allies, which enabled General Eric von Falkenhayn to concentrate his strength on a direct assault upon the British positions outside Ypres.

ABOVE: **A tangible reminder of the fighting at Gheluvelt in 1914 can be found in the form of Gheluvelt Park in the Barbourne area of Worcester. This public park was opened on 17 June 1922, to commemorate the actions of the 2nd Worcesters. It was officially opened by Field Marshal John French who stated "on that day [31 October 1914] the 2nd Worcesters saved the British Empire". The row of houses inside the park, just beyond the gates, was built to house war veterans.** (COURTESY OF DEREK BRADLEY; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

This manifested itself in a major attack which began on 29 October which was focussed on the crossroads at Gheluvelt where the Menin Road crossed between Kruiseecke and Poezelhoek. The crossroads formed the junction between the British 1st and 7th divisions.

Lying on a forward spur of the low ridge that covers the town of Ypres, the village of Gheluvelt was the last point retained in British hands from which the enemy's line could be dominated. The crossroads were held by the 3rd Brigade and two battalions from the 2nd Brigade.

The German attack began with an artillery bombardment followed by a direct infantry assault. Gradually the Germans wore down the defenders and by noon on 31 October 1914, Gheluvelt had been taken and a serious gap driven in the British line. If the breech in the line could not be closed quickly, the Battle of Ypres would, almost certainly, be lost. Indeed orders had already been prepared for artillery to move back in preparation for a general retreat.

Major E.B. Hankey's 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment had so far remained in Polygon Wood uncommitted. At 13.00 hours on 31 October, the Battalion received orders to counter-attack and retake Gheluvelt. From Polygon Wood, the chateau which dominated the village could not be seen but the nearby church tower, rising amidst the smoke, was visible. All around were wounded and stragglers coming to the rear and artillery batteries could be seen limbering up and moving back. Commanded by Major E.B. Hankey, the Worcestershires alone were moving towards the enemy. The ridge was littered with dead and wounded, and along the crest, German shells were falling fast.

What followed is regarded by some as one of the most remarkable actions of the First World War. Less than 600 men of the 2nd Worcesters advanced in the opposite direction to a stream of retreating British units. They crossed the fields between Polygon Wood and Gheluvelt village under heavy artillery fire. More than 100 of the battalion were killed or wounded but the rest pushed on and, increasing their speed as they came to the downward slope in sight of Gheluvelt, made the final charge with the bayonet.

In the grounds of the chateau the Worcesters combined surprise, aggression and British steel to achieve an unlikely victory that temporarily halted the advance of an entire German Army Group. Their actions saved the BEF from a humiliating capture or almost certain catastrophic defeat. ●

ABOVE: **A German prisoner being brought in during the Battle of Gheluvelt.**

THE LOSS OF HMHS ROHILLA

30 OCTOBER 1914

ON 6 August 1914, the British India Steam Navigation Company's steamship SS *Rohilla* was requisitioned and converted for use as a hospital ship. On 29 October 1914, she departed Leith to head across to France. It was in the early hours of the following morning that disaster struck.

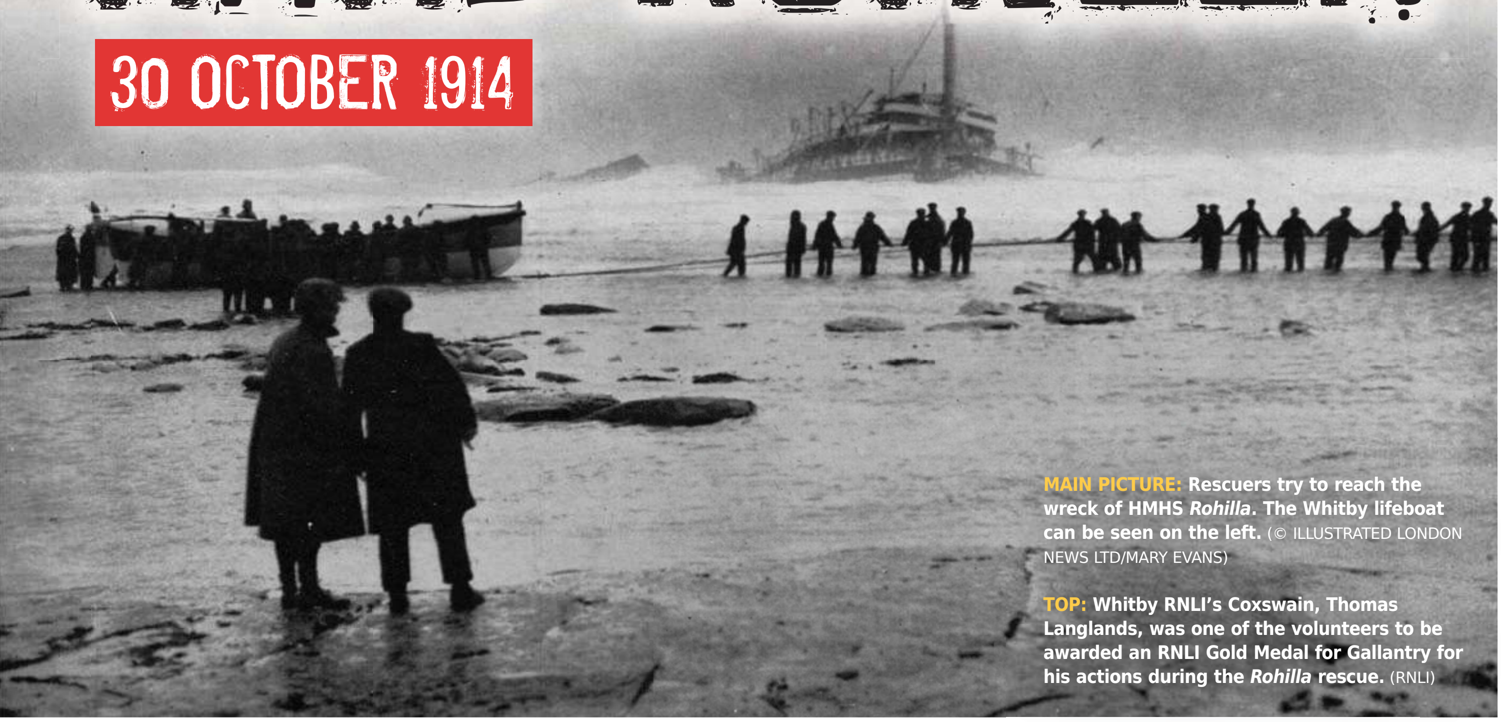
That day His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Rohilla*, under the command of Captain Neilson, was travelling to Dunkirk to pick up wounded from the fighting on the Western Front. As the coastline adhered to a strict night-time blackout and at sea all illuminated buoys were extinguished, the ships had to navigate by dead reckoning. At around 04.00 hours *Rohilla* struck a notorious reef system known as "Whitby Rock" at Saltwick just east of Whitby harbour.

Believing that he could save more lives if he was closer to land, Neilson ordered full speed ahead; his ship ran aground upon rocks near Saltwick Nab. The terrific impact as the ship crashed onto the rocks led to a sudden inrush of water into the engine room, where many of the engine room personnel were drowned. Scores of life belts were washed away before they could be used and only one of the ship's boats remained intact.

HMHS *Rohilla* then broke in two across the well deck, the after section swinging violently around. Coastguard Albert Jefferies, who had earlier tried to warn *Rohilla* by Morse lamp that she was heading towards Whitby Rock, fired signal rockets to alert the Whitby lifeboat.

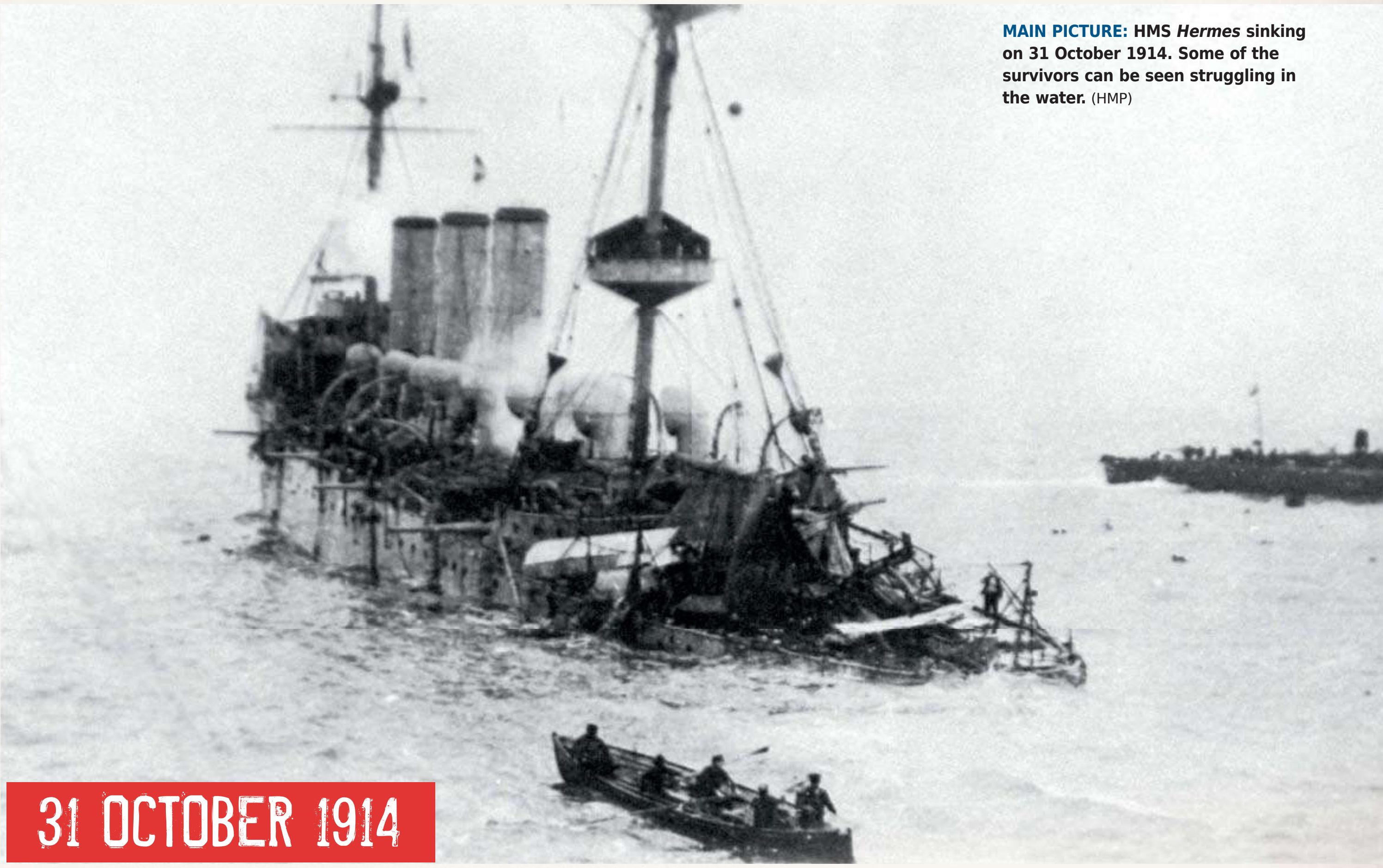
Meanwhile, the crew of *Rohilla* had managed to launch the ship's only sound boat, as one of the survivors recalled: "We had spent a miserable night shivering on deck, for it was not until daylight that we could do anything. Then the captain called for volunteers to take the only remaining boat and row ashore with a line. A lot of us volunteered and five of us were sent with the second mate. What a journey it was! We had hardly got afloat when one oar after another was smashed. It seems a miracle that we got ashore. We lost the line when a big wave came and nearly swamped us. It was a wonder that the boat righted herself, and when she did, she was half filled with water. Close in we were upset, and it was only with assistance of people on shore that we were able to scramble to safety through the water, which was breast high." Eventually a line was rigged up between the ship and the shore and a number of the crew were pulled to safety on a bosun's chair.

When the Whitby lifeboat learnt of the situation *Rohilla* was in, its crew found that the wind and the seas were so great that they could not launch the large boat and instead they carried the smaller boat by hand over a seawall to be launched from the beach. Eventually six lifeboats battled the conditions to reach the ship. The unrelenting courage of the volunteer RNLI lifeboat crews and the community of Whitby, who worked for over fifty hours, saved 144 lives.



MAIN PICTURE: Rescuers try to reach the wreck of HMHS *Rohilla*. The Whitby lifeboat can be seen on the left. (© ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS LTD/MARY EVANS)

TOP: Whitby RNLI's Coxswain, Thomas Langlands, was one of the volunteers to be awarded an RNLI Gold Medal for Gallantry for his actions during the *Rohilla* rescue. (RNLI)



MAIN PICTURE: **HMS *Hermes* sinking on 31 October 1914. Some of the survivors can be seen struggling in the water.** (HMP)

31 OCTOBER 1914

THE LOSS OF HMS HERMES

ON 18 October 1914, during its first war patrol, the German U-boat *U-27*, under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Bernd Wegener, attacked and sank the British submarine *E3* off Borkum Island. The engagement marked the first decisive combat between submarines since the start of the First World War. It was not the only success Wegener would enjoy on this mission. Thirteen days later, on 31 October, he spotted the Royal Navy seaplane carrier HMS *Hermes* in the English Channel.

Laid down in April 1897 and launched on 7 April 1898, the Highflyer-class cruiser HMS *Hermes* was the eighth Royal Navy warship to carry the name. Having variously served as the flagship of the East Indies Station and then the Cape Station (1907-1913), by early 1913 HMS *Hermes* was considered obsolete. As a result, by May of that year HMS *Hermes* had been converted to operate in a new role as an experimental seaplane ship.

The results of HMS *Hermes*' trials were used to help design HMS *Ark Royal*, completed as a seaplane carrier using a pre-existing hull after her purchase in May 1914. However, the experiments came to an end in December 1913, at which point the aircraft and equipment were removed and *Hermes* reverted to a cruiser and was re-commissioned. Shortly afterwards, though, she was taken out of service and placed in reserve.

With the outbreak of war, frantic steps were taken to re-equip HMS *Hermes* in the role of seaplane carrier. On 30 October 1914, HMS *Hermes* docked at Dunkirk with one cargo of seaplanes having sailed from Portsmouth earlier the same day. Early the next morning she set out on the return journey. However, she had barely left the safety of Dunkirk harbour when her captain, Captain Charles Laverock Lambe, received reports that a German submarine was believed to be operating in the area. One account states that he was instructed to return to port.

At this point HMS *Hermes* was sighted by *Kapitänleutnant* Wegener. Planning his attack carefully, at a position some eight miles north of Calais, near the Ruylingen Bank, Wegener fired two torpedoes. Both struck the former cruiser with devastating effect.

With her hull breeched, HMS *Hermes* began to settle by the stern. Despite the extent of the damage, she remained afloat for nearly two hours, allowing the majority of her crew of over 400, Captain Lambe included, to be rescued by of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway Company's steamship *Invicta*, and two Royal Navy destroyers. Twenty-two of the ship's crew (including four members of the Royal Marine Light Infantry) were lost; all but two have no known grave.

Today the wreck of HMS *Hermes* lies in some thirty metres of water, inverted and slightly twisted with her Port side largely on the seabed. The engine room and stern areas are described as "open and easy to look into" and there is a companionway running just inside the starboard side from a break in the hull which is roughly amidships. The stern is quite broken up but the bows are intact and a number of fittings, including deck guns and the very prominent round crow's nests, can still be seen by divers. It is reported that the remains of two aircraft still lie amongst the wreckage. ●

Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher “Kit” George Francis Maurice Cradock KCVO, CB, SGM. Lost in the sinking of HMS *Good Hope*, Cradock is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

THE BATTLE OF CORONEL

1 NOVEMBER 1914

IN AUGUST 1914 Vice-Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee commanded a small squadron of German warships, led by the armoured cruisers SMS *Scharnhorst* and SMS *Gneisenau*, which was located at the Caroline Islands in the western Pacific. From the outbreak of war von Spee was given a free hand by Berlin, and he set off to patrol the shipping lanes off the coast of South America in search of Allied vessels.

Also at sea in that area was Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradocks’ South Atlantic Squadron, which consisted of three elderly cruisers HMS *Good Hope*, HMS *Monmouth* and HMS *Glasgow* along with the armed merchant ship *Otranto*. Von Spee’s six warships threw a much heavier broadside that the Royal Navy ships, particularly *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* which both mounted eight 21cm and six 15cm guns. Cradock was aware of the presence of von Spee’s squadron and he was ordered to try and find it and to “be prepared to meet them in company”, which he took to mean that he should engage the German ships even though he would be heavily outgunned.

What was described as “tempestuous” weather in the South Atlantic had been raging for many days at the end of October and on 1 November, Cradocks’ buffeted ships were spread over fifteen miles of heavy seas. That afternoon von Spee’s squadron was sighted approximately forty miles west of the Chilean port of Coronel.

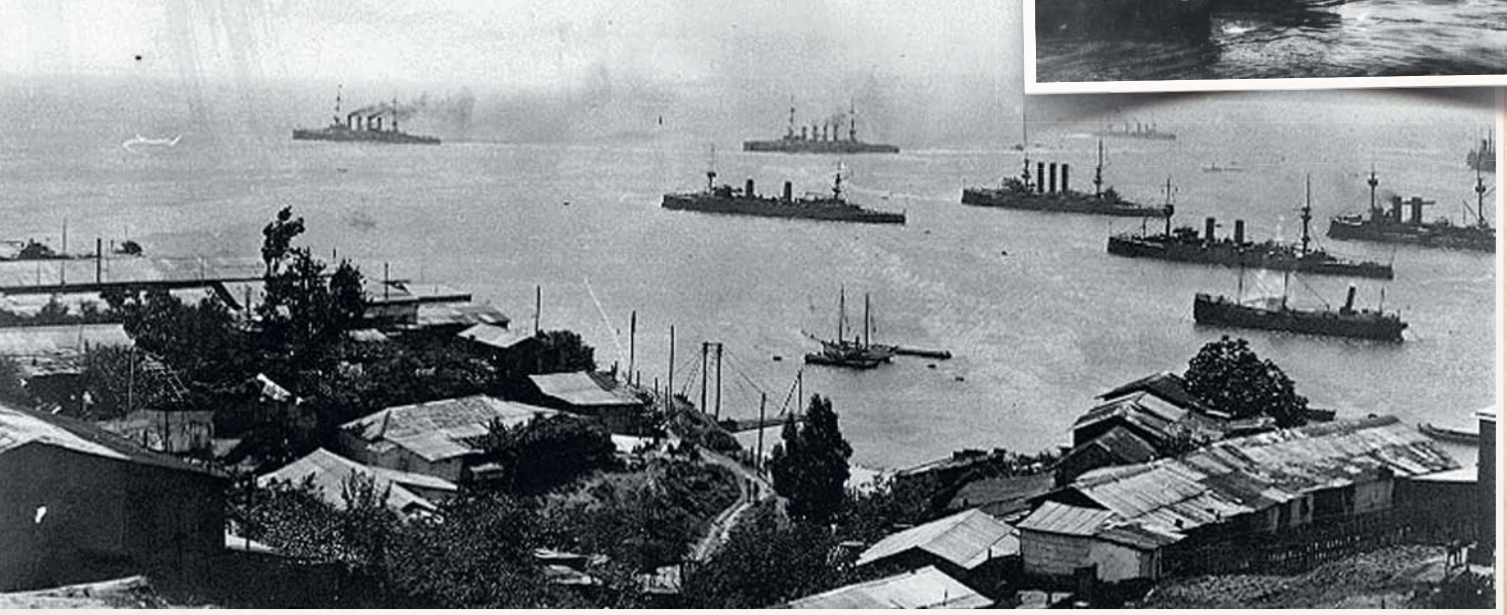
Cradock could have avoided battle, as his ships were marginally faster than those of the Germans and the old battleship HMS *Canopus*, with its 12-inch guns, was on its way to join him. However, had he waited, Cradock would have let the Germans escape. So he issued the order, “I am going to attack now!”

Von Spee recorded the battle as it unfolded: “At 6.39 the first hit was recorded on the *Good Hope*, and shortly afterwards the British opened fire. I am of opinion that they suffered more from the heavy seas than we did. Both their armoured cruisers, with the shortening of range and the falling light, were practically covered by our fire, while they themselves, so far as can be ascertained at present, only hit the *Scharnhorst* twice and the *Gneisenau* four times. At 6.53, when at a distance of sixty hectometres, I sheered off a point.” (The times here are those maintained by the Germans which were actually about thirty minutes behind local time.)

The third salvo from *Scharnhorst* ignited the cordite charges of HMS *Good Hope’s* main armament and flames spread along the warship. HMS *Monmouth* was also soon on fire. Eventually, with the British ships unable to defend themselves, von Spee moved in and shelled the ships until both sank. Because of the heavy seas, no attempt was made to rescue survivors and all 1,570 men of the two British ships died. *Glasgow* and *Otranto* both escaped. The Germans had just three men wounded. The Royal Navy, however, extracted its revenge on 8 December 1914. ●

RIGHT: The German cruiser SMS *Scharnhorst* pictured in the harbour at Valparaiso, Chile, after the Battle of Coronel, 2 November 1914. (MARY EVANS/SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO)

BELOW: The German squadron departs Valparaiso on 3 November 1914 after the Battle of Coronel. SMS *Scharnhorst* and SMS *Gneisenau* are in the lead, with SMS *Nürnberg* following. (US NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER)



THE BATTLE OF THE BEES

ABOVE: **A member of the German *Schutztruppe* (literally Protection Force) in East Africa, frequently referred to as Askaris, pictured holding a German flag. The *Schutztruppe* is often quoted as the only colonial German force in the First World War not to have been defeated in open combat (although they often retreated when outnumbered).** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 105-DOA6369)

ABOVE: **Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. Following the fighting at Tanga, von Lettow-Vorbeck's reputation, already in the ascendant, continued to grow. His war record was indeed remarkable; he never lost a battle and remained undefeated by the time he eventually surrendered to the British on 25 November 1918, having belatedly heard of the Armistice from a captured British prisoner. He returned to Germany a national hero.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 183-R05765)

2 NOVEMBER 1914

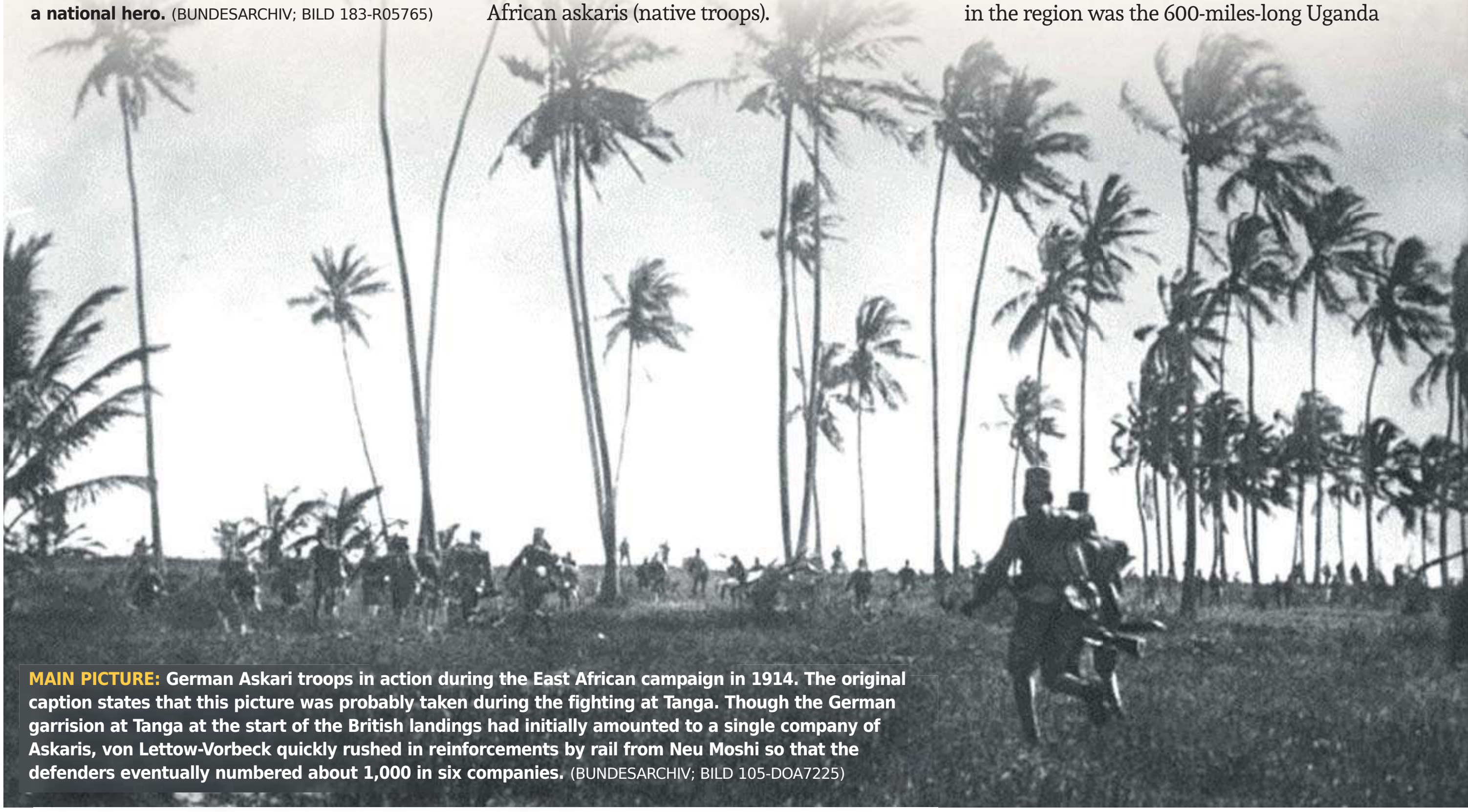
THE EAST African Campaign of the First World War is largely remembered through the achievements of the commander of the forces in German East Africa, Lieutenant Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck.

German East Africa was Germany's largest overseas possession. More than 380,000 square miles in area, it was larger than France and Germany combined. It was inhabited by some 5,000 Europeans, 15,000 Indians and Arabs, and 7.5 million Africans. Potentially hostile colonies surrounded German East Africa with British East Africa to the north, the Belgian Congo in the west, Rhodesia in the south-west and Portuguese Mozambique in the south-east. It was into this setting that early in 1914 von Lettow-Vorbeck arrived to take command of a *Schutztruppe* of 260 European officers and NCOs and 2,472 African askaris (native troops).

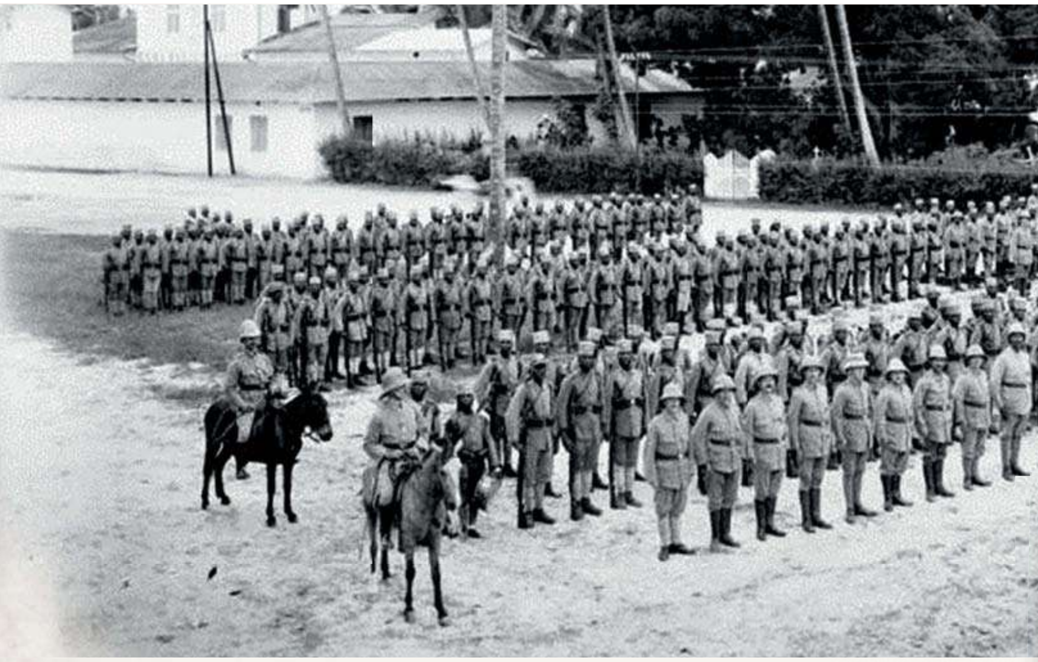
Though agreements had been put in place to try and keep the African colonies out of any war between the Europeans, emotions ran high, and British settlers could not be prevented from moving across the border from Uganda in British East Africa to attack German outposts on Lake Victoria. On 8 August 1914, the Royal Navy also bombarded the German colony's capital Dar es Salaam.

At this point von Lettow-Vorbeck stepped into history. He followed up further British incursions into German East Africa with his own raids into British East Africa and Uganda.

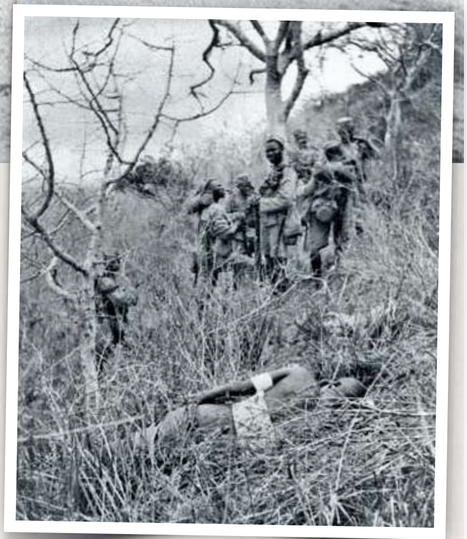
Apart from the key ports of Dar es Salaam and Tanga, the most important strategic asset in the region was the 600-miles-long Uganda



MAIN PICTURE: **German Askari troops in action during the East African campaign in 1914. The original caption states that this picture was probably taken during the fighting at Tanga. Though the German garrison at Tanga at the start of the British landings had initially amounted to a single company of Askaris, von Lettow-Vorbeck quickly rushed in reinforcements by rail from Neu Moshi so that the defenders eventually numbered about 1,000 in six companies.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 105-DOA7225)



ABOVE: **A company of Askari troops pictured during the East African campaign. The colonial force for German East Africa was established by an act of the Reichstag on 22 March 1891.**
(BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 105-DOA3056/WALTHER DOBBERTIN/CC-BY-SA)



ABOVE: **A patrol of the 4th Battalion King's African Rifles regroups after a fight in the bush during the East African Campaign in 1914. A wounded German Askari lies in the foreground.**
(IWM; Q67818)

railway which linked Uganda and Kenya with the Indian Ocean at Mombasa, the other great port in the region. The most vulnerable point on the railway line was where it ran closest to the German East African border just north of Mount Kilimanjaro. The military objective of the two battalions of the King's African Rifles and the various volunteer units was the protection of British assets along the border with the German colony.

The decision was taken to eliminate the problems caused by the German raids by mounting a large scale offensive. For this two Anglo-Indian expeditionary forces were quickly assembled and despatched from Bombay by sea. The plan of operations was that one of the forces would make an amphibious assault upon the port of Tanga whilst the second force would conduct an overland advance to the terminus of the German Usamara railway which ran to Tanga.

On 2 November 1914, the Indian Expeditionary Force 'B', some 8,000 men led by Major General A.E. Aitken, arrived off Tanga in a convoy led by the cruiser HMS *Fox*. The cruiser's commander, Captain Francis Caulfield, went ashore and gave the German's one hour to surrender. All this did was give von Lettow-Vorbeck's men time to prepare.

As the Germans refused to haul down their flag, once the harbour had been swept for mines the men of Force 'B' were landed on beaches outside the city. The troops went ashore unopposed at two locations – at the harbour itself and three miles east on a mine-free beach. As dusk fell on 3 November, almost all of the British troops were ashore. At noon the next day, Aitken ordered his troops to march on Tanga.

Though the German forces amounted to only around 1,000 men, they quickly and effectively broke up the ill-formed and untried advancing Indian units. By early afternoon the fighting had taken upon the nature of jungle skirmishing, occasionally interrupted by swarms of angry bees which, prevalent in the East African bush, attacked the men of both sides – for which reason the fighting is sometimes called the Battle of the Bees. Some Askari units even undertook bayonet attacks along the entire British front to "bugle calls and piercing tribal war cries".

Amid scenes of utter confusion, Aitken ordered a withdrawal back to the transports. During the retreat and evacuation, which lasted well into the night, the British troops left behind nearly all their equipment. "Lettow-Vorbeck was able to re-arm three Askari companies with modern rifles," wrote one author, "for which he now had 600,000 rounds of ammunition. He also had sixteen more machine guns, valuable field telephones and enough clothing to last the *Schutztruppe* for a year."

It was a humiliating defeat, the attack at Tanga having cost the British 847 casualties (including 360 fatalities). In turn the Germans had suffered sixty-seven dead from a total of 148 casualties. The whole campaign had been, noted the *Official History of the War*, "one of the most notable failures in British military history".

The advance by a second 4,000-strong Anglo-Indian force towards Kilimanjaro encountered stiff opposition from around 600 askaris who were supported by eighty-six colonial volunteers of 8th *Schützenkompagnie.* Despite the odds, the Germans held onto their positions and Brigadier J.M. Stewart was forced to retire. One British officer involved in this mission later remarked: "We marched all night, fought all day, and then having failed to turn the Germans out came back here as we had no water."

Von Lettow-Vorbeck's vastly outnumbered forces had inflicted two humiliating defeats and the fighting in East Africa would continue until the very end of the war. ●

ABOVE: **Dead soldiers of the Anglo-Indian force pictured on the beach at Tanga after the fighting in November 1914.**
(BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 146-1971-057-05)

THE BLOCKADE OF GERMANY

3 NOVEMBER 1914

AS SOON as war was declared, the Royal Navy went into action to limit the movement of German ships, particularly in the North Sea. "Every German cruiser in foreign waters vanished into the immense spaces of the sea," boasted the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, "every German merchant ship, from the earliest moment when the entry of Britain into the war became apparent, fled for neutral harbours. Seven out of eight potential commerce destroyers were bottled up without ever a shot being fired. German seaborne trade outside the Baltic ceased to exist from the night of 4 August."

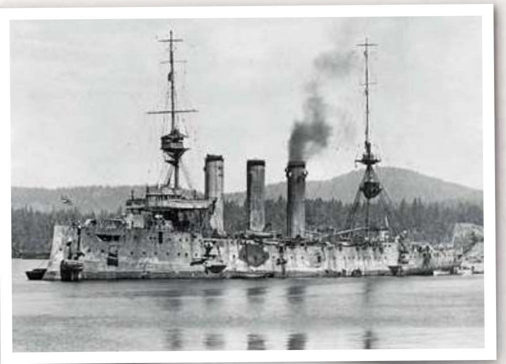
Churchill was also able to claim that of the forty-two German liners which could be converted to auxiliary cruisers, eleven were tied up unarmed in harbours in the United States and being watched by Royal Navy cruisers just outside US territorial waters. A further six had taken refuge in other neutral harbours where they were either dismantled or under surveillance by Royal Navy warships. Six others had immediately been captured by the Royal Navy, leaving just five unaccounted for.

Though no German ships could hope to break the blockade imposed upon its ports this, though, did not prevent the ships from neutral countries sailing to Germany. As it was considered necessary to bring every possible pressure to bear on Germany, the decision was taken to impose a complete maritime blockade. Consequently, on 3 November 1914, the North Sea was declared a British "military area".

What this meant in practice was that the Royal Navy was ordered to patrol the North Sea and stop any merchant vessels suspected of carrying cargo destined for Germany. The Royal Navy was issued contraband lists against which it would check the cargo of any intercepted vessels.

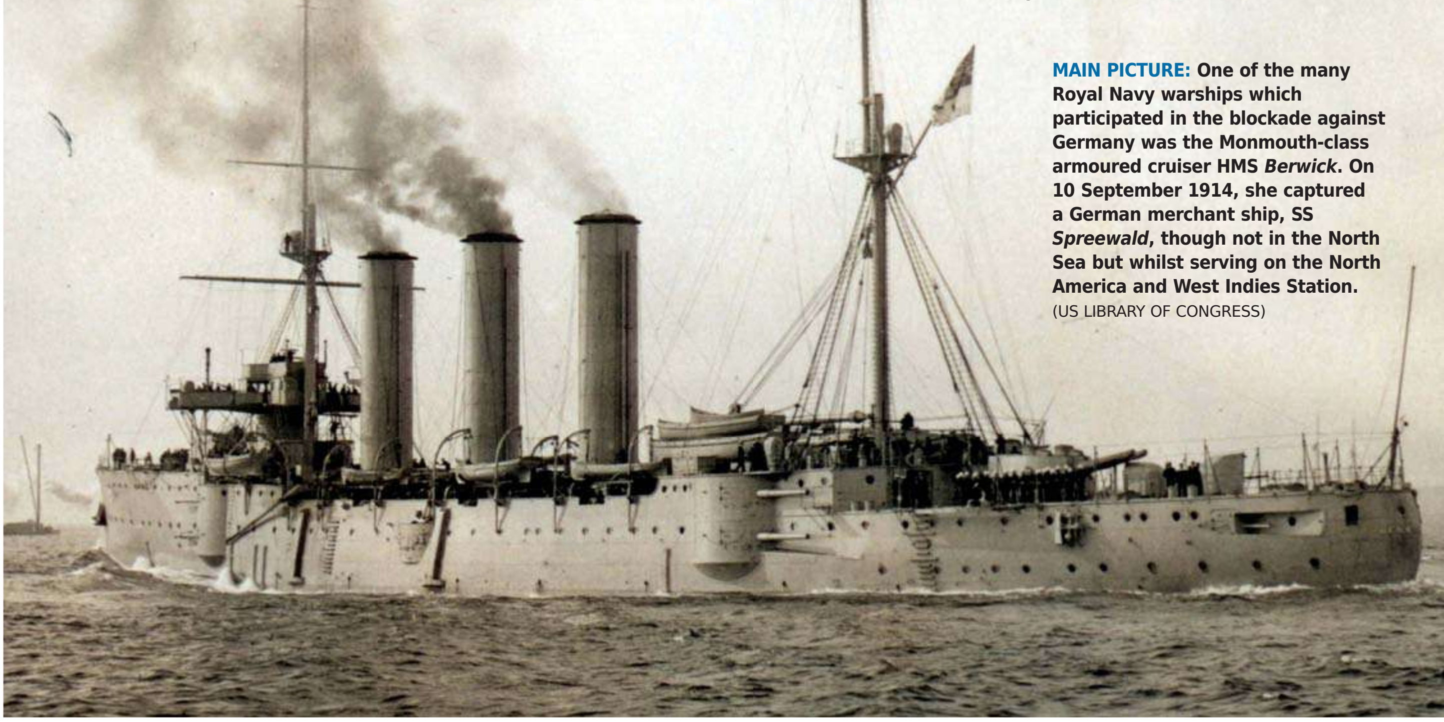
To make this easier to enforce, the Royal Navy laid minefields. This stopped merchant ships from trying to evade the blockade as any efforts to avoid the minefields resulted in them running into the Royal Navy patrols. As there was no way around or through the minefields, neutral ships had to put into port for inspection. Ships found not to be carrying contraband were then escorted safely through the minefields.

Rear Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, the man placed in charge of what was known as the Northern Blockade, explained how the system worked: "A modern blockade is not a ring of ships steaming within sight of each other, forming a sort of fence across sea-tracks to enemy countries. Our North Sea blockade consists of the strategic placing of units of patrolling squadrons, all out of sight of each other but within easy steaming distance. Usually our cruisers are about twenty miles apart, and as each cruiser is afforded a clear view of fifteen miles to the horizon, no blockade runner can pass between them without being seen by one or both."

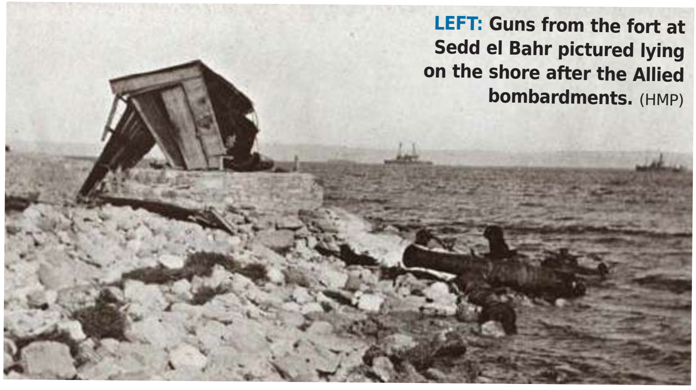


ABOVE: **Another early success against Germany's seaborne trade was the capture of one enemy merchant ship, SS *Syra*, by HMS *Cornwall* (another Monmouth-class armoured cruiser) on 6 August 1914. *Cornwall* is pictured here at Esquimalt in December 1914 following its participation in the Battle of the Falkland Islands (see page 110).** (CANADIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

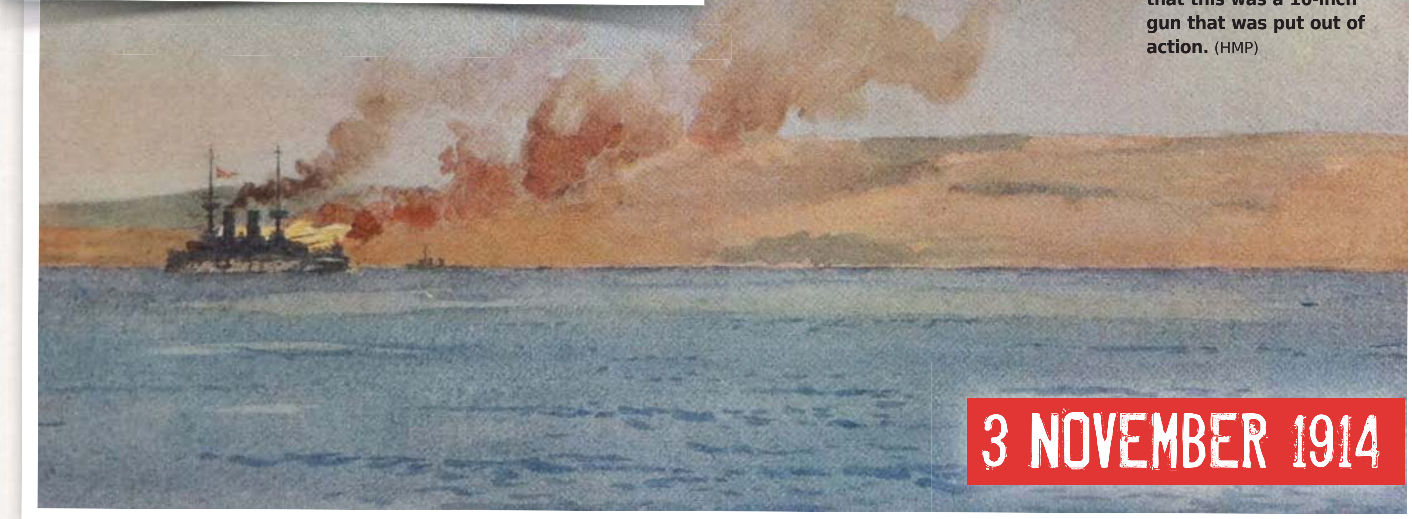
Eventually, Admiral de Chair was able to report, "we now have a complicated network of cruisers scattered over the North Sea areas a network through which it is impossible for any steamer, sailing ship, or trawler, flying either a neutral or enemy flag, to pass without coming under our direct observation." ●



MAIN PICTURE: **One of the many Royal Navy warships which participated in the blockade against Germany was the Monmouth-class armoured cruiser HMS *Berwick*. On 10 September 1914, she captured a German merchant ship, SS *Spreewald*, though not in the North Sea but whilst serving on the North America and West Indies Station.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



LEFT: Guns from the fort at Sedd el Bahr pictured lying on the shore after the Allied bombardments. (HMP)



MAIN PICTURE: The French battleship *Suffren* shelling Turkish positions on the Gallipoli peninsula – though this is a subsequent bombardment to that of 3 November 1914. (HMP)

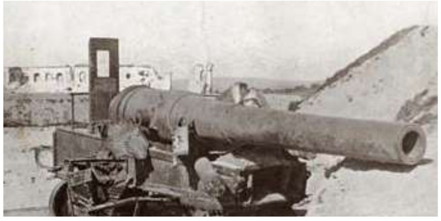
3 NOVEMBER 1914

THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE DARDANELLES

INITIALLY, THE Turkish Ottoman Empire, though having established close links with Germany over the preceding decades, remained neutral after the Allied declaration of war. Then an incident forced the hand of the Sublime Porte (the central government of the Ottoman Empire).

At large in the Mediterranean at the start of the war were two German warships; the battlecruiser SMS *Goeben* and the light cruiser SMS *Breslau*. The British Mediterranean Fleet was ordered to track them down and sink them. The German ships escaped to Constantinople and, to overcome neutrality regulations, they were incorporated into the Ottoman Navy.

On 27 October 1914, the two German warships, along with a division of Turkish vessels, steamed into the Black Sea and bombarded the Russian fortress of Sevastopol. They then moved up the Black Sea, sinking a Russian transport vessel and practically destroying the port of Novorossisk and all the shipping in the harbour.



BOTTOM: One of the Turkish guns at Sedd el Bahr fort pictured in 1915. The original caption states that this was a 10-inch gun that was put out of action. (HMP)

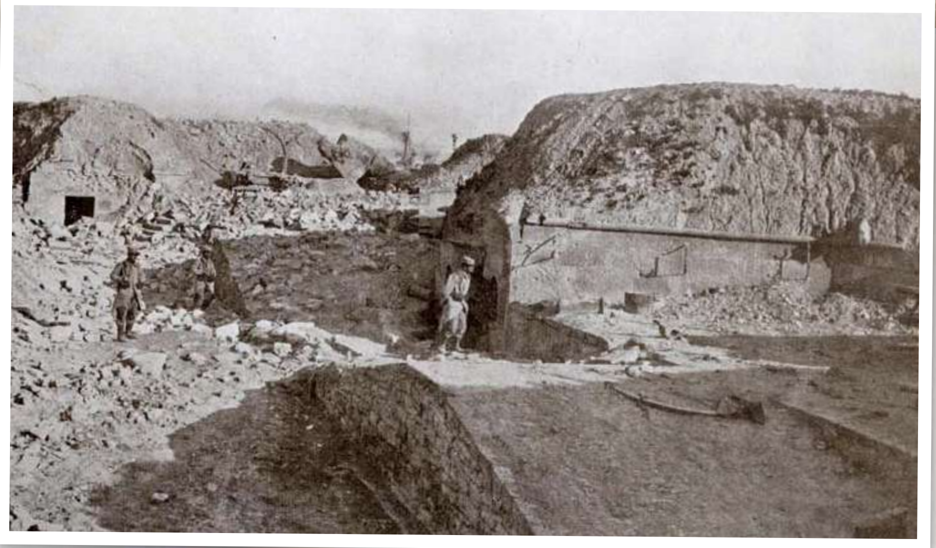
As a result, the Russian ambassador demanded his passports and on 30 October Russia declared war on Turkey. As allies of Russian, Britain and France followed suit by withdrawing their ambassadors from Constantinople.

The following message was sent from the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, at 17.05 hours on 31 October to all ships: "Commence hostilities at once against Turkey. Acknowledge." The commander of an Anglo-French fleet squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean, Vice Admiral S.H. Carden, was also told by Churchill to bombard the outer forts of the Dardanelles at long range "at the earliest suitable occasion".

The forty-one-mile-long Dardanelles Strait links the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Known in ancient times as the Hellespont, the strait is less than four miles across at its widest point with depths varying to a maximum of half-a-mile with the water flowing in both directions. From its mouth at Cape Helles to the Sea of Marmara, the narrow waterway is bounded by the Gallipoli heights and by many lesser hills. The entrance to the strait was guarded by four forts, two on either side. Ten miles up the strait was another series of forts and a single line of sea mines strung from shore to shore. At the Narrows, just thirteen miles from the entrance, the channel has a width of less than a mile and is protected by yet more forts. ▷▷

At 06.50 hours on the morning of 3 November 1914, the French pre-Dreadnought battleships *Suffren* and *Vérité*, and the Royal Navy battle-cruisers HMS *Indomitable* and HMS *Indefatigable* opened fire on all four of the forts at the entrance of the strait. The British ships fired at a range of 15,000 yards, their 12-inch guns out-ranging the four Turkish 24cm (9.4-inch) Krupp L/35 guns located at Ertugrul on the Gallipoli Peninsula and Orhaniye on the Anatolian side of the Strait. These guns did reply, but possibly with just one salvo.

For seventeen minutes *Indomitable*'s and *Indefatigable*'s bombardment continued. Despite spectacularly blasting quantities of soil into the air, which was soon cleared by the Turks, little damage was done to either fort.



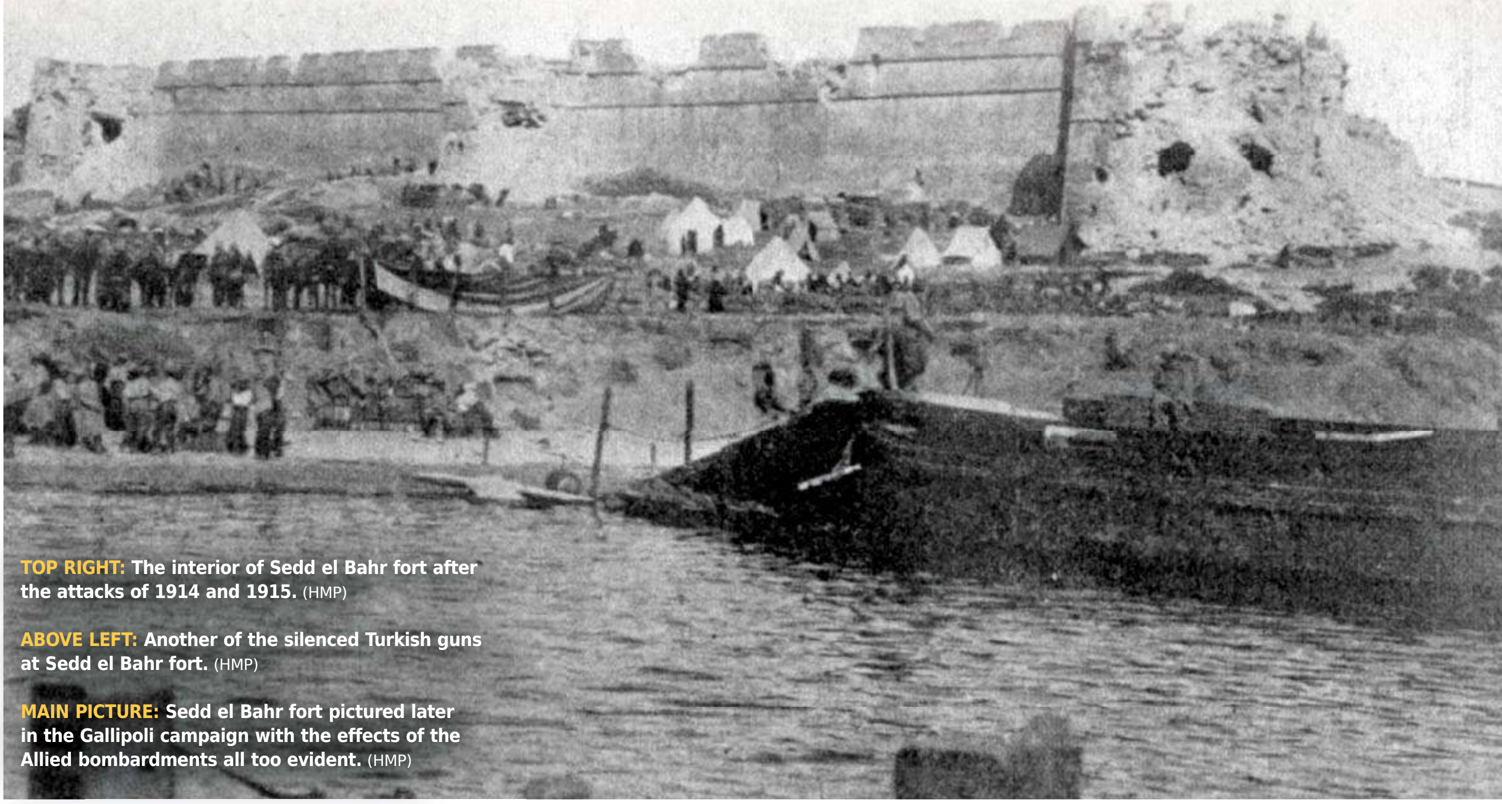
The fort at Kum Kale on the Anatolian shore also escaped serious damage, but it was a different matter with the fort at Sedd el Bahr to the east of Ertugrul on Gallipoli. Its fifteenth-century stone-built west tower took a direct hit, blowing up the powder and shells stored in it and those placed outside it, and displacing a number of guns. Total casualties across the four forts amounted to 150 men, of whom forty were Germans, many having been killed when a barracks was hit.

Djevad Pasha, the Turkish commandant at Sedd el Bahr, testified after the war that the attack, though more or less a reconnaissance, caused more damage than any succeeding attack. At the same time, noted the captain of the destroyer HMS *Harpy*, "The Turkish guns were quite outranged, and as far as I could see, only a few ricochets came near us. I hope this war will be prosecuted with vigour, and that we shall not be content with a 20 minute bombardment occasionally."

The British Prime Minister, Asquith, however, was less impressed: "The shelling of a fort at the Dardanelles seems to have succeeded in blowing up a magazine", he wrote, adding, "but that is *peu de chose* [nothing much]. At any rate we are now frankly at war with Turkey." In fact, it was a further two days before, on 5 November 1914, the United Kingdom and France both officially declared war on the Ottoman Empire, the British government having reached the conclusion that, due to the bombardment and destruction of the fort, "a final declaration of war against Turkey could no longer be postponed".

The reasons for this attack upon the Dardanelles were later explained by Churchill: "War had been declared with Turkey. It was natural that fire should be opened upon the enemy as it would on the fronts of hostile armies. It was necessary to know accurately the effective ranges of the Turkish guns and the conditions under which the entrance to the blockaded port could be approached."

In reality the attack achieved nothing except that it alerted the Turks to the weakness of their defences. From that date onwards the Turks, with assistance from German military advisors, worked hard at strengthening their forts and garrisons on both sides of the Dardanelles. The seeds of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign had been sown. ●



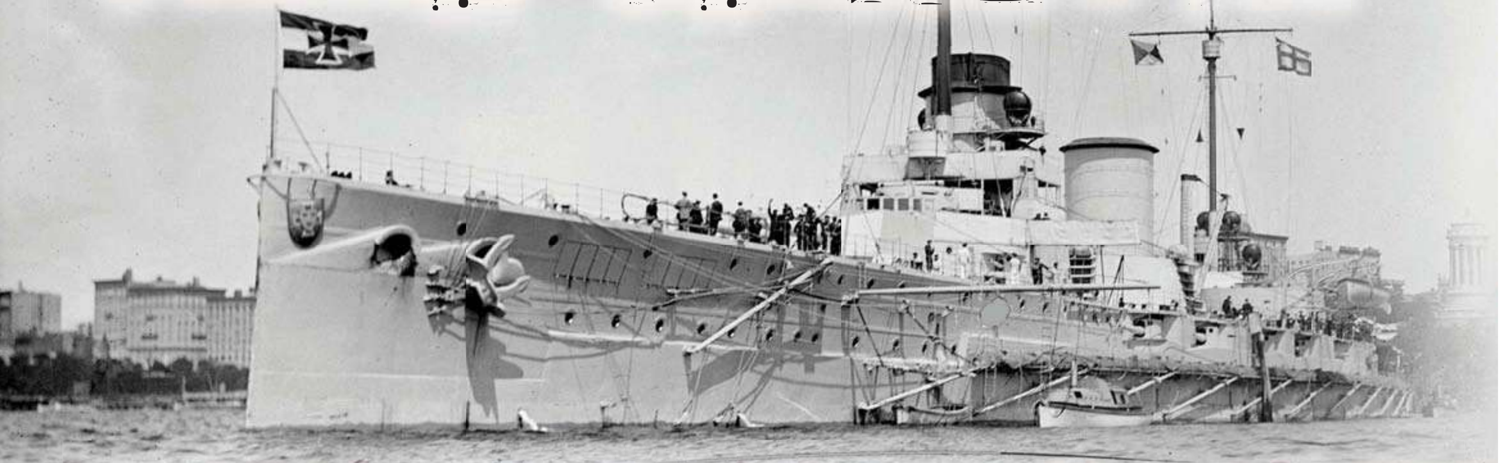
TOP RIGHT: The interior of Sedd el Bahr fort after the attacks of 1914 and 1915. (HMP)

ABOVE LEFT: Another of the silenced Turkish guns at Sedd el Bahr fort. (HMP)

MAIN PICTURE: Sedd el Bahr fort pictured later in the Gallipoli campaign with the effects of the Allied bombardments all too evident. (HMP)

THE RAID UPON GREAT YARMOUTH

3 NOVEMBER 1914



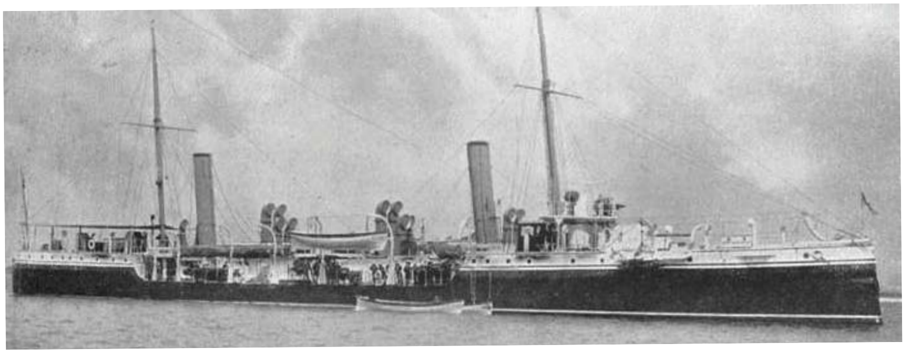
MAIN PICTURE: **One of the German warships that attacked Yarmouth on 3 November 1914, the SMS *Moltke* pictured prior to the outbreak of war. The lead ship in her class, *Moltke* participated in most of the major fleet actions conducted by the German Navy during the First World War. By the end of 1914, this battlecruiser had already been involved in the Battle of Heligoland Bight (see page 50) and the bombardment of the East Coast during December (see page 114).** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE GERMANS knew that they could never defeat the Royal Navy in a major fleet engagement but it was hoped that if they could entice small numbers of British ships into open waters they might be able to lure them into a trap. The way this might be accomplished, it was thought, would be to attack the British coast. Repeated attacks might also persuade the Royal Navy to disperse its warships around the UK, thus weakening its main battle fleet, the Grand Fleet, leaving it vulnerable to the battleships of the German High Seas Fleet.

The first such attempt was made on the morning of 3 November 1914. A German battlecruiser squadron sailed towards Great Yarmouth whilst two squadrons of German battleships laid in wait further out at sea.

The battlecruisers were intercepted by the "coastguard gunboat" HMS *Halcyon* and the destroyers HMS *Lively* and HMS *Leopard* which were on patrol off Yarmouth. Outranged, the British ships made smoke to conceal their movements as the battlecruisers opened fire. After a few moments the German ships turned their guns on Yarmouth itself.

"It began soon after 7 o'clock and went on furiously for 20 minutes," ran a newspaper report two days later. "The many who were asleep in the town were rudely awakened by the reverberation of the guns and the clattering of windows and shaking of houses. The few who were awake quickly made their way to the beach. All they could see was flash after flash on the horizon followed by the dropping of shells in the sea and the leaping of great cascades of water."



ABOVE: **HMS *Halcyon* also pictured pre-war. During its brief engagement with the German warships, *Halcyon* had her wireless equipment, bridge and a funnel damaged. She returned to Lowestoft with one badly-injured crewman, Able Seaman Harry Scotney, who died later the same day.**

It is reported that some 120 shells were fired by the German warships, though none fell beyond the beach and none struck the town. One shell fell within a few hundred yards of the naval air station on the south side of Yarmouth; others were seen to fall close to Caistor and Gorleston.

Another reporter, writing on 4 November, noted: "Thousands of people were drawn to the Marine Parade this morning by continuous heavy firing, which shook the buildings in every part of the town to their very foundations. For half an hour the flashes of the guns were seen outside the Cross Sand, eight miles away, and some shells were seen to fall into the roads, in the track of passing vessels. Fishing vessels running into port report narrow escapes. The crew of a Berwick boat state that they lay flat on the deck while shells passed over them."

Other British warships at Yarmouth immediately raised steam to give chase. Amongst these were the submarines HMS *E10*, *D5*, and *D3*. At a point about two miles south of the South Cross Buoy, *D5* struck a mine that had been laid, during the raid, by SMS *Stralsund*. Only five of *D5*'s crew, including her captain, survived. "They [the Germans] have sunk a British submarine by their wily, diabolical device of sowing mines whilst at full steam in retreat," stated *The Daily Mail*.

At 09.55 hours, Admiral Beatty was ordered south from Scapa Flow with a British battlecruiser squadron, with warships of the Grand Fleet following from Ireland. The response from the Royal Navy was greater than the Germans had considered and they withdrew to the safety of home waters. ●

THE BATTLE FOR THE OILFIELDS

6 NOVEMBER 1914

NEVER BEFORE in warfare had oil been seen as a vital strategic asset. But by 1914 the first warships with oil-fired boilers had already been launched and vehicles and aircraft were being used in increasing numbers, all of which needed oil. If the war was to become a protracted affair it was certain that oil would become increasingly important.

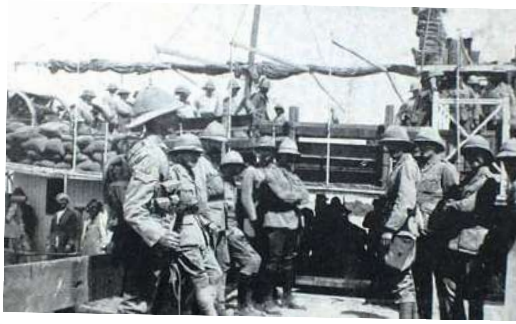
Britain controlled much of this oil through the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which had been founded in 1908 and had obtained exclusive rights to petroleum deposits throughout the Persian Empire. Anglo-Persian was established in Kuwait, which was a British protectorate, from where it ran an oil pipe-line down to the Shatt al-Arab waterway where the Euphrates and the Tigris met as they flow into the Gulf. There was located the vast oil refinery of Abadan and the city of Basra which was the main port in the region through which most of the oil was shipped.

A view of the Anglo-Indian trenches and dug-outs constructed near Basra.

Most of the Gulf area was part of the Ottoman Empire whose ambivalent attitude at the beginning of the war was of great concern to the British government. Indeed, it soon became clear that the Turks were building up their troops to secure the Shatt al-Arab and Abadan. Britain decided to pre-empt a move by the Ottomans by despatching a force from India.

As it transpired events moved more rapidly than expected. On 29 October 1914, the Ottoman Empire attacked Russia in the Black Sea. On the 31st, the British Admiralty ordered the Commander-in-Chief of the naval forces in the Persian Gulf to do the following: "Commence hostilities against the Turks; proceed up the Shatt al-Arab to protect oil facilities in Abadan; and to land expeditionary troops at Fao, just south of Basra."

Those expeditionary troops took the form of the 6th (Poona) Division (which later became part of what was designated the Indian Expeditionary Force 'D') under the



ABOVE: **Troops from a British regiment being transported by river. The movement of troops during the campaign was usually carried out with considerable difficulty as often there were no barges, tugs or small boats suitable, and land transport was poor.**

BELOW: **British troops pictured being landed from a river steamer during the operations to capture Basra. It would appear that the steamer is also carrying two field guns, and that the weapons onboard are protected by sand-bags and iron sleepers.**
(ALL IMAGES HMP)

ABOVE: A Turkish gun captured during the fighting in November 1914.

command of Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Barrett. Britain then declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 5 November 1914, and a small contingent of Royal Marines and three companies of Indian troops landed the next day on the Fao peninsula.

"The occupation of Basra," wrote one contemporaneous author, "was effected almost by the sound of the trumpet. Two brigades of the Indian army, with a few sloops-of-war, outmanoeuvred the Turks into disorderly retreat, and reached their objective within three weeks of the opening of hostilities."

The operation was not quite as simple as that statement implies. It was 600 men of Brigadier-General Walter Delamain's 16th Brigade that attacked the only Ottoman stronghold on the Gulf, the Fortress at Fao. It fell after two days of fighting. Even as the fortress was being attacked the rest of the 5,000-strong Indian force set off for Basra.

Led by the rest of 16th Brigade, the Expeditionary Force moved up the River Euphrates, supported by naval sloops and an armed merchant cruiser. The British force reached Abadan on 7 November, with Delamain's troops quickly dispersing the light resistance that was offered. Delamain established a fortified camp some three miles further up the river.

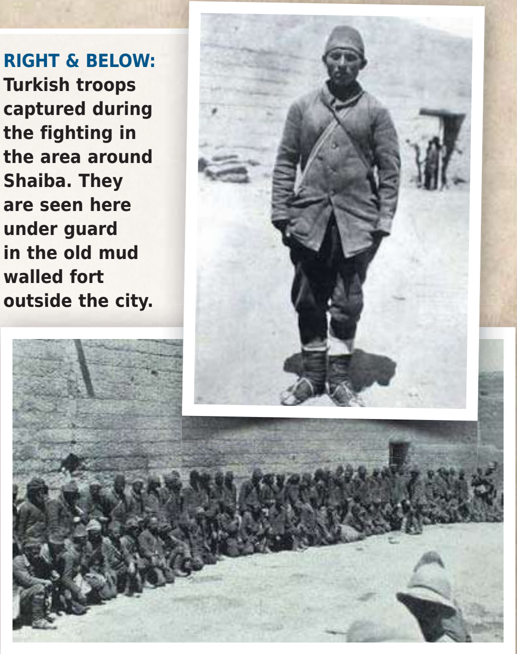
The camp was attacked at dawn on 11 November by approximately 400 Turkish troops, who were repelled with heavy losses. Within the space of three days a further 7,000 Indian troops had been added to Expeditionary Force 'D', along with light artillery. Barrett now resolved to lose no time in taking Basra, in spite of the fact that he had been informed that a significant Turkish force of 4,500 men, operating under Subhi Bey (commander of lower Mesopotamian forces), was assembling there to defend the city.

In preparation for the assault on Basra, Barrett captured forward Turkish defensive positions at Shaiba before launching a full-scale attack on 19 November. Through a heavy rain storm which reduced visibility and turned the desert into mud, the attacking force – consisting of two brigades of British and Indian infantry supported by cavalry – assaulted the Turks who were dug in near some palm groves and an old mud walled fort outside the city.

The attack was held up by the conditions more than the inaccurate fire of the Ottomans. Nevertheless, it was only when 18-pounder artillery pieces were brought into action that the defenders were scattered. The Ottomans were able to escape, it is said, because of a heat mirage which confused the attackers and because the horses of the cavalry could not pursue them through the thick mud.

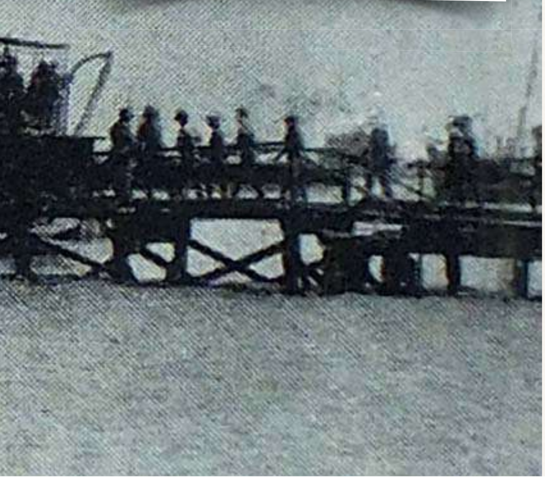
Though they had lost the battle, the Ottomans tried to close the Shatt al-Arab waterway, to prevent the British from advancing further towards Basra, by sinking a barrage of block ships across. This attempt failed and the British were able to pass through.

The following morning Barrett received news from a local Arab Sheikh that the Turks had withdrawn, leaving Basra empty. Two battalions of infantry, the 104th Wellesley's Rifles and 117th Mahrattas, embarked immediately and sailed to Basra, entering the city during the evening of 21 November 1914; Barrett officially took possession two days later. Following a campaign that had immense strategic implications, the oilfields of the Middle East were now safely in British hands. ●



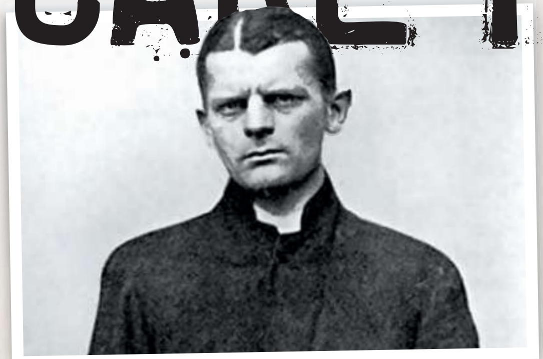
RIGHT & BELOW: Turkish troops captured during the fighting in the area around Shaiba. They are seen here under guard in the old mud walled fort outside the city.

Indian troops in a trench dug during the fighting to secure the oilfields.



BELOW: British troops in a trench near Basra.

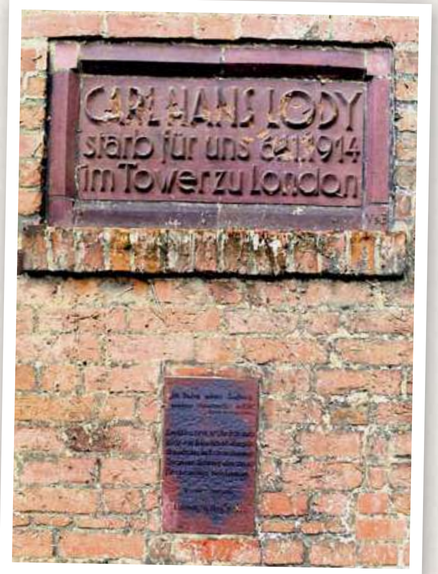
THE EXECUTION OF CARL HANS LODY



ABOVE: Carl Hans Lody.

6 NOVEMBER 1914

FOLLOWING THE publication of alarmist books such as *The Riddle of the Sands*, what can only be described as "Spy Mania" gripped the United Kingdom. According to Basil Thompson, the Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard in charge of the CID, on the outbreak of war in August 1914, the belief that the country was swarming with German spies, "assumed a virulent epidemic form accompanied by delusions which defied treatment". Even "sober, stolid, and otherwise truthful people", were convinced that spies were lurking around every corner.



ABOVE: All that remains to be seen today of the memorial to Carl Hans Lody.

It was against this background that MI5 and the other security services had to sift the facts from the fiction and guard the country and its secrets from the real, not the imagined enemy agents. One of the real agents was Carl Hans Lody.

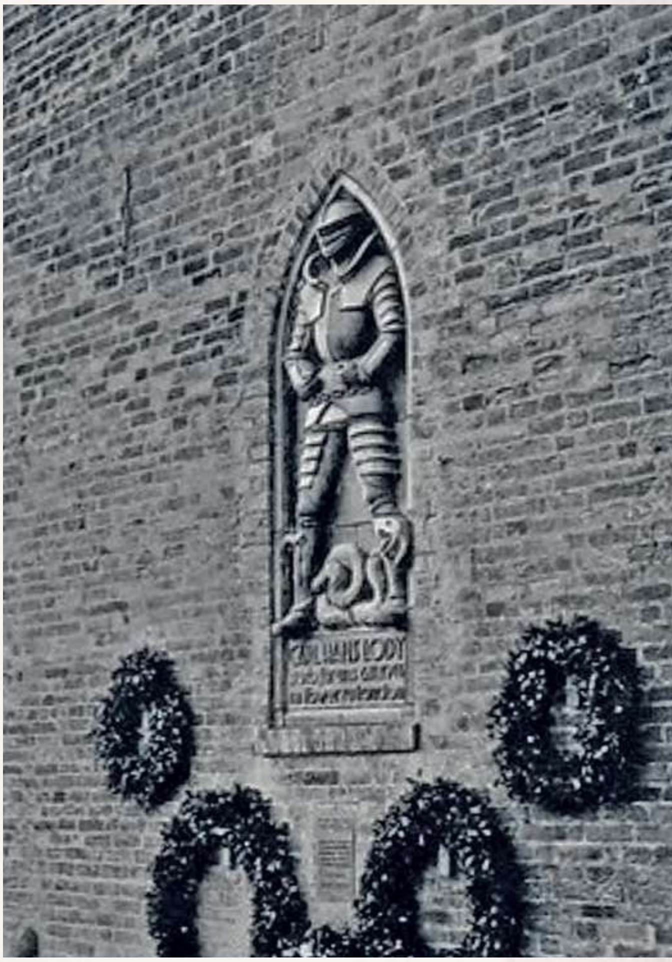
Having been provided with a false American passport under the name of "Charles A. Inglis", Lody left Germany on 14 August 1914. He initially headed to neutral Norway, from where he took a ship to Newcastle, arriving on 27 August. He then went to Edinburgh, an important naval base, where he found lodgings.

Lody, however, had been given only the most rudimentary training in espionage techniques. His only means of communication with Germany was by telegrams and letters posted to neutral countries. Unaware that MI5 was monitoring letters and telegrams abroad, Lody sent a number of telegrams using a simple code, but other highly incriminating messages were sent in plain text. Consequently, his activities were detected in his very first message home, though his identity remained unknown for the immediate future. Lody's situation was exacerbated by the fact that this communication had been sent to one Adolf Buchard in Stockholm – MI5 knew that this address was a cover for German intelligence.

Lody's downfall came when he travelled to Dublin on 29 September 1914. Journeying via Liverpool, Lody decided to write at length on the various merchant and naval vessels he saw. This letter was again written in plain text. As it contained information of real military value, the authorities decided to act. Urgent investigations soon led MI5 to Charles A. Inglis' hotel in Ireland. It was there that he was arrested on 2 October 1914. The police discovered Lody's true identity when they found a tailor's ticket in his jacket.

Found guilty at his trial, Lody was taken to the Tower of London. He was reported to have said to the officer who escorted him from his cell to the execution ground, "I suppose that you will not care to shake hands with a German spy." "No," the officer replied, "but I will shake hands with a brave man".

Lody was shot in the miniature rifle range in the Tower of London at dawn on 6 November 1914. He was the first person to be executed in the Tower of London for 167 years. He was also the first German spy to be executed in the United Kingdom during the First World War. ●



ABOVE: Located at the Burgtor town gate in Lübeck, this memorial to Carl Hans Lody was unveiled in 1934. Aside from the plaques, the memorial was removed after the Second World War in 1946.

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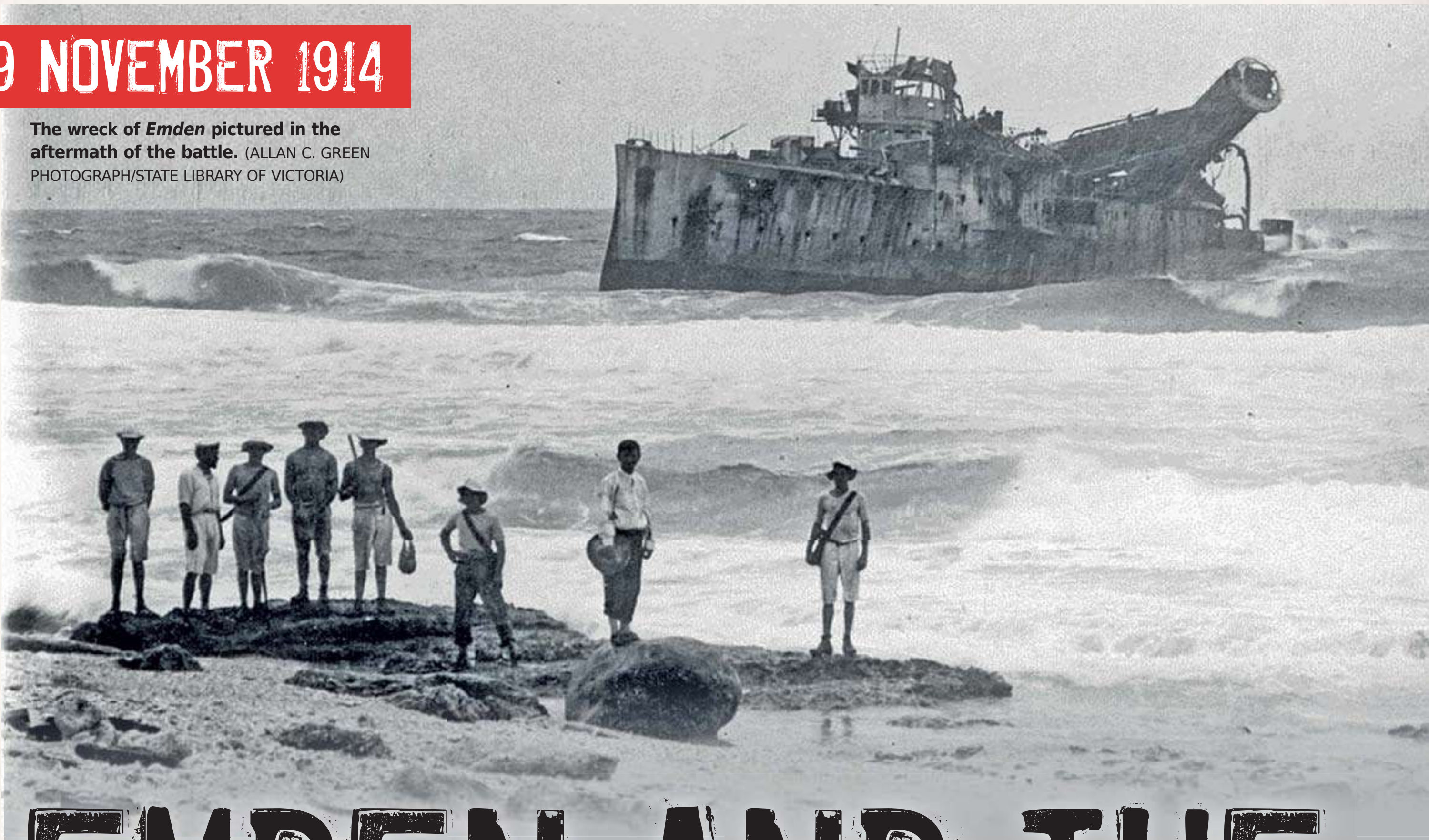
9 NOVEMBER 1914



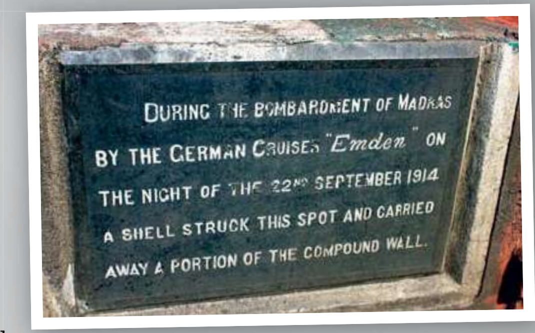
The wreck of *Emden* pictured in the aftermath of the battle. (ALLAN C. GREEN PHOTOGRAPH/STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA)

EMDEN AND THE COCOS ISLANDS

SUCH WAS the speed of warship development in the early decades of the twentieth century the last of the *Dresden*-class light cruisers, SMS Emden, was already obsolescent by the time she was launched on 25 May 1908. Regarded, therefore, as unsuitable for a place with the *Kaiserliche Marine's* High Seas Fleet, she was condemned to service in the Ostasiengeschwader, or German East Asiatic Squadron, based at the German port of Tsingtao in north-east China.

When war broke out *Emden* was sent into the Indian Ocean to create as much havoc as possible to divert the attention of the Royal Navy from the main theatre of operations in the North Sea and the English Channel. Under her captain, *Fregattenkapitän* Karl von Müller, *Emden,* far exceeded expectations. In a three month period she destroyed or captured some thirty British and Allied merchant ships. Müller also shelled the oil tanks at Madras and, on the opposite side of the Bay of Bengal, sunk the Russian cruiser *Zhemchug* at anchor in the harbour of Penang. *Emden* also sank a small French torpedo boat *Mosquet.*

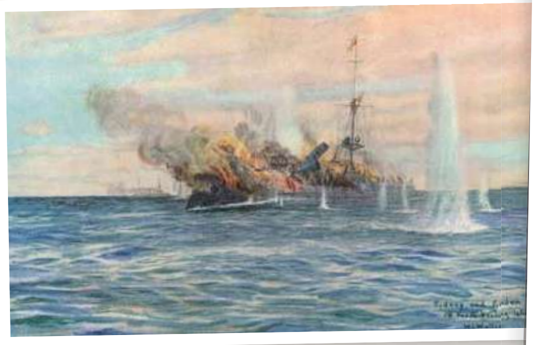
Such was the fear and havoc *Emden* caused all shipping in the Indian Ocean was brought to a standstill. Something clearly had to be done, and a large force of Royal Navy warships, led by the heavy cruiser HMS *Hampshire*, was ordered to track down the German cruiser. Müller was able to stay ahead of *Hampshire* as he was able to intercept her signals which were often sent un-coded in plain language.



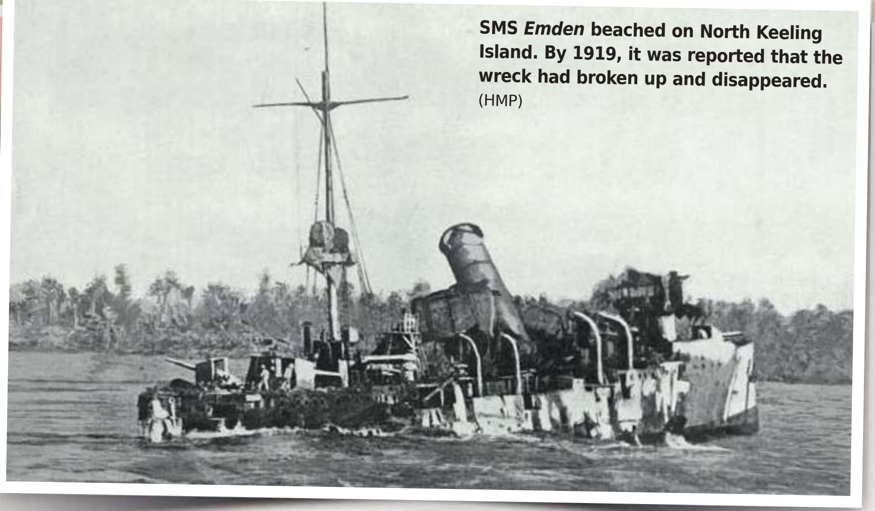
DURING THE BOMBARDMENT OF MADRAS
BY THE GERMAN CRUISER "*Emden*" ON
THE NIGHT OF THE 22ND SEPTEMBER 1914
A SHELL STRUCK THIS SPOT AND CARRIED
AWAY A PORTION OF THE COMPOUND WALL.

ABOVE: **A plaque commemorating the bombardment of Madras by *Emden* which can be seen by the Judge's gate at Madras' high-court.**

It was one of the ironies of the war that *Emden*'s success was also to be her downfall. Because of her actions in the Indian Ocean, a convoy of thirty-eight transports carrying the Australian Imperial Force from Albany in Western Australia to the Red Sea was protected by a large number of Australian, British and Japanese warships. As the convoy was crossing the Indian Ocean on the morning of 9 November 1914, a message was received by the commander of the convoy escort, Captain Mortimer Silver, from the



ABOVE: **A painting by William Lionel Wyllie depicting HMAS *Sydney* engaging SMS Emden (foreground) off North Keeling Island on 9 November 1914.** (HMP)



SMS *Emden* beached on North Keeling Island. By 1919, it was reported that the wreck had broken up and disappeared. (HMP)

cable station on Direction Island in the Cocos archipelago which read "Strange warship approaching". Several ships in the convoy and the escort had also heard a query from the Cocos Islands Wireless Telegraphy Station asking "What is that code?".

The coded signal was from Müller requesting that the German collier *Buresk* rendezvous with *Emden* at the Cocos. Müller then sent ashore a fifty-strong raiding party to destroy the cable station at Direction Island. Realising what was happening, one of the station's operators began sending out the message "SOS *Emden* here" until a gun was put to his head. Remarkably, in those early, less brutal days of the First World War, after the Germans had cut down the main wireless mask, they were asked not to damage the tennis court! The Royal Navy, however, now knew where the threat was.

The Australian Town-class light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* was immediately detached from the convoy and ordered to investigate. Müller thought that the nearest enemy warships were around 250 miles away, but he had miscalculated. *Sydney* was just fifty miles away and heading towards the Cocos at full speed.

Taken by surprise, Müller could not escape when *Sydney* was suddenly spotted bearing down upon *Emden*. Though both ships were classed as light cruisers, the German ship carried only 4.1-inch guns compared with *Sydney*'s eight 6-inch guns. The Australian cruiser was also two knots faster.

A smoke signal was sent up by the German warship recalling its landing party. Müller, though, could not risk waiting and he made for open water leaving the landing party behind on the island.

The battle should have been over quickly, but Captain John Glossop needlessly took his ship within range of *Emden*'s smaller guns and the German ship opened fire first at a range of 10,500 yards. Those first shots missed, as did the second, but Müller's third salvo hit *Sydney*'s superstructure and knocked out the ship's range-finders and one of its guns. For the next few minutes *Sydney* continued to take hits, with fifteen strikes being recorded, killing a number of the crew.

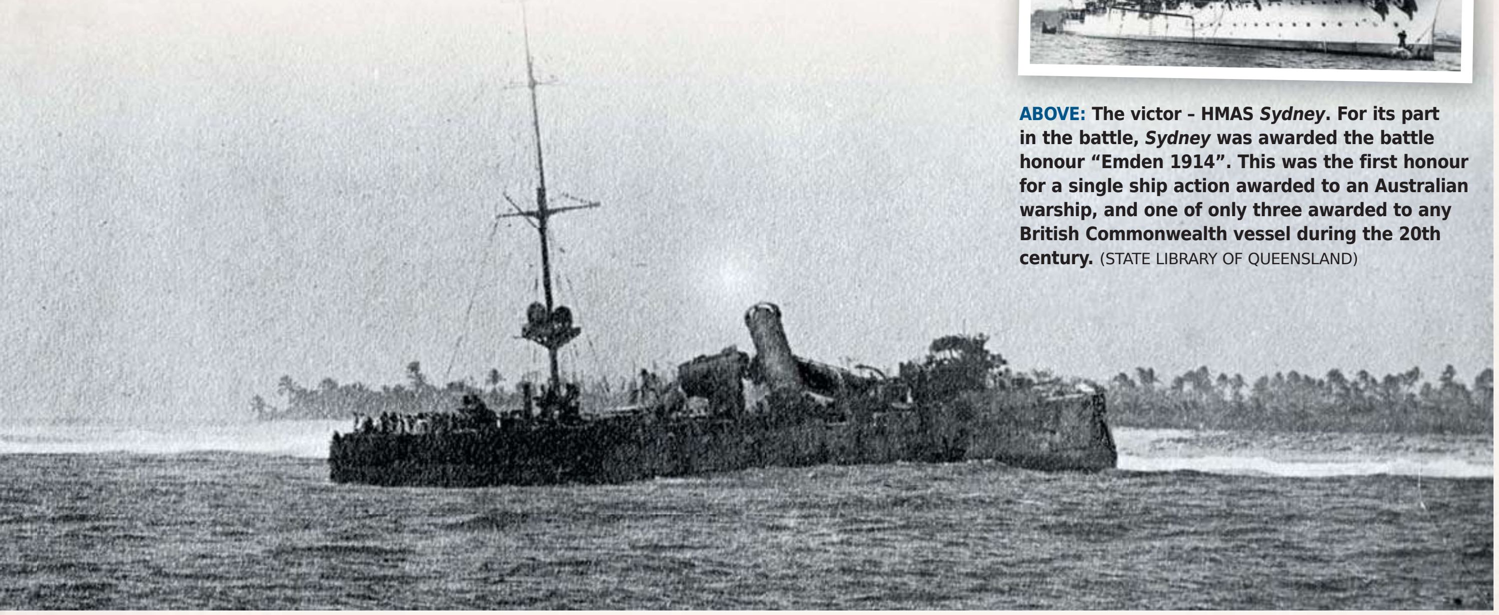
At this point, Glossop pulled back out of range of *Emden*'s guns. Without a range-finder the gunners had to calculate their guns' trajectories independently. Nevertheless, they eventually found *Emden*'s range and began to pound the German warship. After twenty minutes of this bombardment, *Emden* was little more than a floating wreck. Yet Müller refused to give in and the battle continued for over an hour until, at 11.20 hours, the cruiser ran herself aground on North Keeling Island.

Of *Emden*'s crew, 134 had been killed or later died of their wounds. A further sixty-nine were wounded. On board *Sydney*, by comparison, other than the four men killed in the early stages of the battle, only sixteen other seamen were wounded.

The remainder of the crew on *Emden* when she grounded, 157 in total, were taken aboard *Sydney*. The Australian cruiser then headed back to the convoy, which she rejoined in Colombo on 15 November. The landing party from *Emden*, which had been left on Direction Island, managed to escape. The fifty men commandeered a schooner and sailed all the way to Constantinople. ●

ABOVE: **The victor – HMAS *Sydney*. For its part in the battle, *Sydney* was awarded the battle honour "Emden 1914". This was the first honour for a single ship action awarded to an Australian warship, and one of only three awarded to any British Commonwealth vessel during the 20th century.** (STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND)

BELOW: **The wreck of SMS *Emden* after the Battle of Cocos. Shortly after the battle, the auxiliary cruiser HMS *Empress of Japan* visited the wreck to recover any surviving signal logs.** (HMP)



THE HOUSEHOLDERS' RETURN

11 NOVEMBER 1914

ONE FACTOR which helped in the recruitment boom in the weeks and months following the outbreak of war in August 1914 was the formation, on the 27th August (some accounts state the 31st), of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC). Essentially an apolitical organisation, the PRC was made up of thirty-two members, including eleven Conservative, seven Liberal, four Labour MPs, and Sir Henry Rawlinson, all of whom were presided over by the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, the Conservative Party leader, Andrew Bonar Law and the Labour Party leader Arthur Henderson.

The PRC was charged with energizing the various recruitment campaigns, and in doing so placed at the disposal of the War Office the entire network of local party political organisations. As well as supporting or forming local committees, the PRC's main methods of appeal were through mass recruiting rallies and through posters and pamphlets that encouraged enlistment. For designing the latter, the PRC drew on the expertise of Hedley La Bas and Eric Field of the Caxton Advertising Agency.

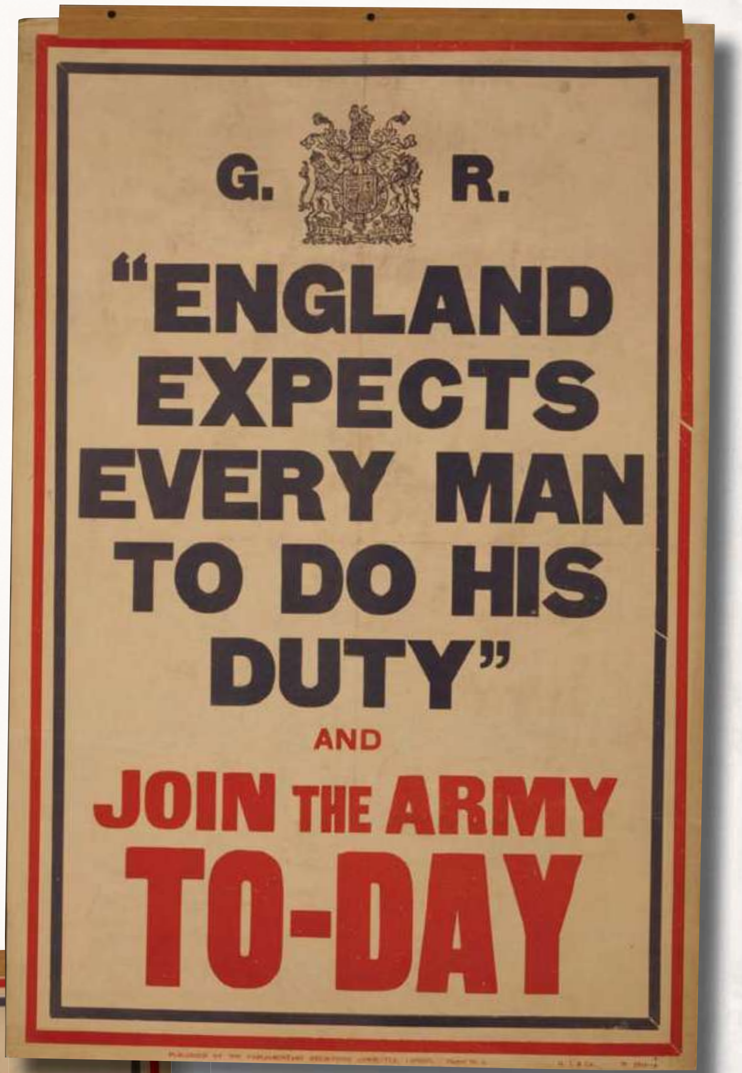
Initially the PRC's publications section decided that no elaborate posters were needed, with the result that the earliest recruiting posters tended to be blown-up versions of handbills, usually with text in one or two colours, and sometimes simply giving the technical terms of enlistment. They contained no visual images and relied on block-printed slogans. By as early as January 1915 about a million posters and 13 million leaflets had been issued. Eventually there would be almost 200 different PRC poster designs, with production running into many millions.

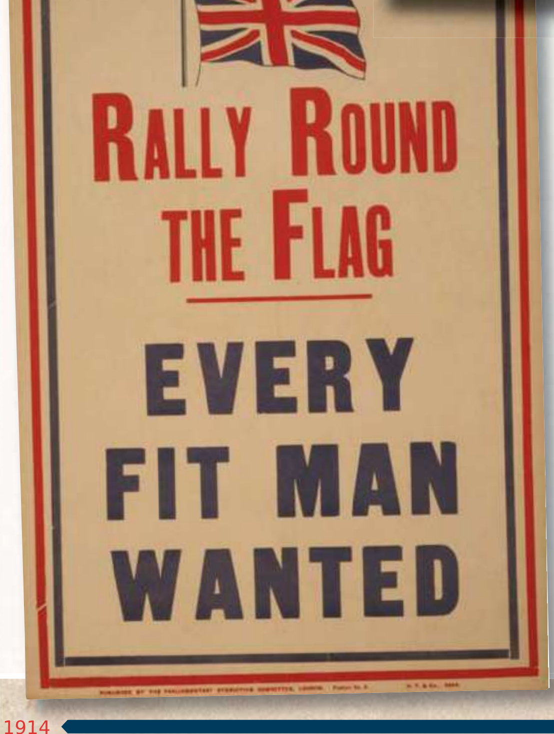
On 11 November 1914, the central office of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was authorised to send out the Householders' Return. This was a huge, almost unprecedented, undertaking, both in scope and scale. Co-ordinated by Sir Jesse Herbert at the National Liberal Club, it saw every household in the UK receive a form and accompanying letter through which the Return sought the details of those males residing at each address who were aged between 19 and 35 years, including their willingness to enlist. The letter, signed by Asquith, Bonar Law and Henderson, stated:

"We desire to draw your attention to the enclosed form, in which you are asked to state the names of your household who are willing to enlist for the War. By filling in and posting the Householder's Return without delay, you will be entered in a Register, and the nearest Recruiting Office will arrange to attest those registered as their services are required ...

"In order to maintain and reinforce our troops abroad and to complete the new armies which we hope within a few months to throw into the field, we and all the best the Nation can give us of its youth and strength ... Every man, therefore, who is eligible will ask his own conscience whether, in this emergency, it is not his duty to hold himself ready to enlist in the forces of the brave."

The composer Edward Elgar was one of those who received the Return. He duly completed it, stating, "There is no person in this house qualified to enlist: I will do so if permitted." ●





RIGHT: The very first poster issued by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in 1914. **BELOW:** The PRC's poster No.2. (BOTH IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

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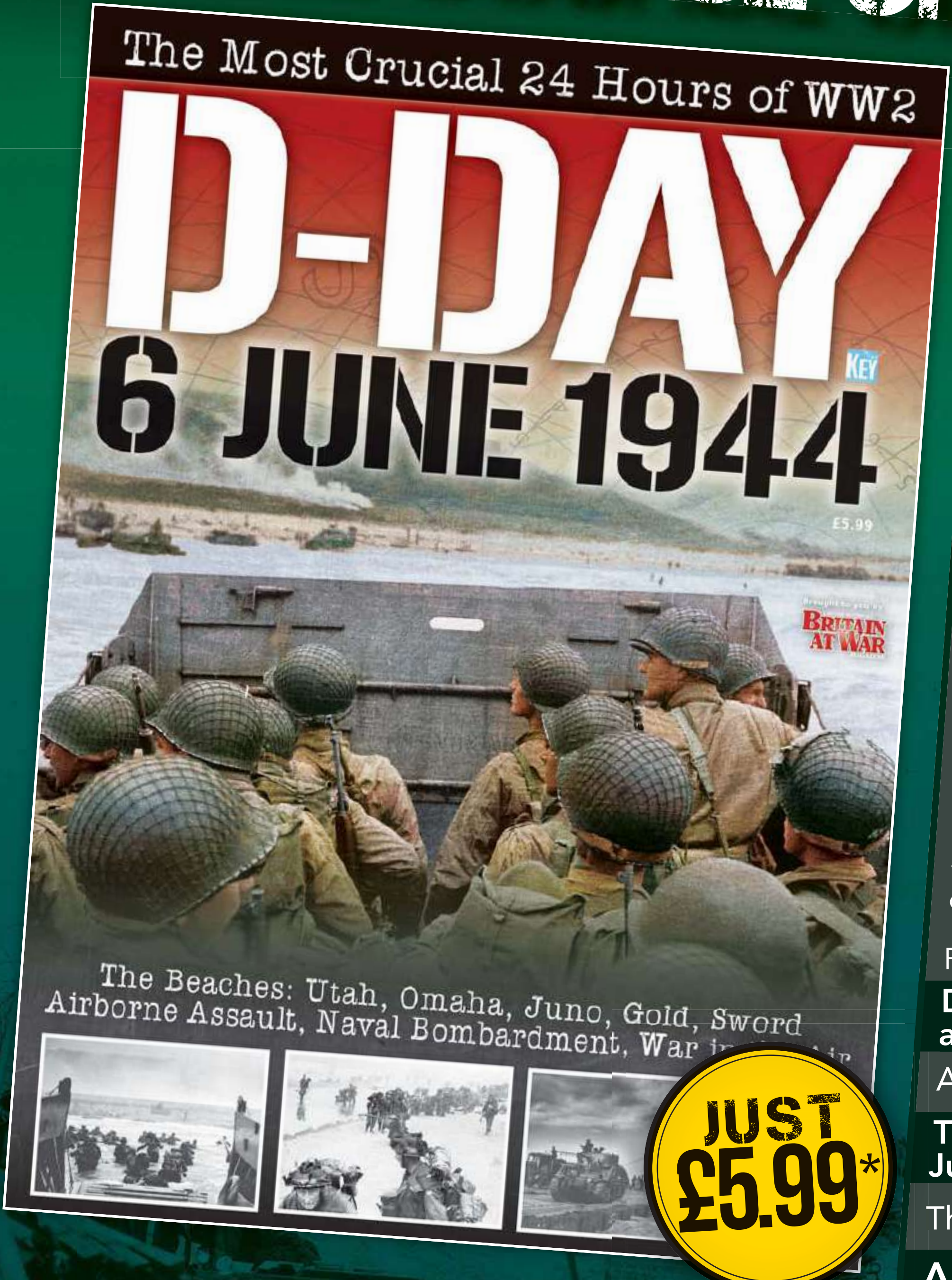

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346 /14

HUNDREDTH DAY OF THE WAR

11 NOVEMBER 1914

WITH THE war having lasted 100 days, and no sign of it ending by Christmas as many had believed it would, the new session of Parliament was opened by King George V, accompanied by the Queen. In his speech, the King stated:

“The energies and sympathies of My subjects in every part of the Empire are concentrated on the prosecution to a victorious issue of the War on which we are engaged. I have summoned you now in order that sharing, as I am aware you do, My conviction that this is a duty of paramount and supreme importance, you should take whatever steps are needed for its adequate discharge.

“Since I last addressed you, the area of the War has been enlarged by the participation in the struggle of the Ottoman Empire. In conjunction with My Allies, and in spite of repeated and continuous provocations, I strove to preserve, in regard to Turkey, a friendly neutrality. Bad counsels, and alien influences, have driven her into a policy of wanton and defiant aggression, and a state of war now exists between us. My Mussulman subjects know well that a rupture with Turkey has been forced upon Me against My will, and I recognise with appreciation and gratitude the proofs, which they have hastened to give, of their loyal devotion and support.

“My Navy and Army continue, throughout the area of conflict, to maintain in full measure their glorious traditions. We watch and follow their steadfastness and valour with thankfulness and pride, and there is, throughout My Empire, a fixed determination to secure, at whatever sacrifice, the triumph of our arms, and the vindication of our cause.”

OTHER EVENTS ON 11 NOVEMBER 1914

- HMS *Niger* was torpedoed by a U-boat off Deal, Kent.
- During the Battle of Nonne Bosschen the Prussian Guard was defeated near Ypres.
- Austrian troops captured Valjevo, Serbia.

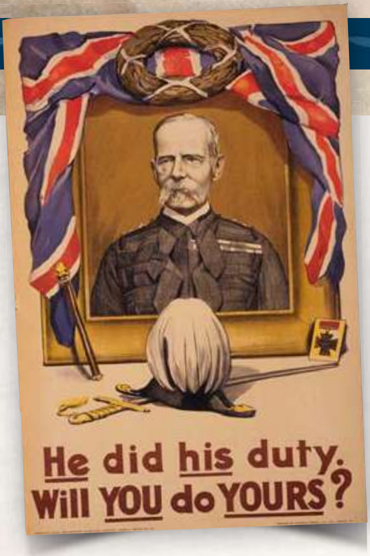
BELOW: Another member of the Royal family, the Prince of Wales, pictured on the way to do his duty. The original caption states: “The 20-year old Prince of Wales leaving Buckingham Palace, London, to join his Grenadier Guards with whom he has gone to the Front”. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

The King then spoke directly to the members of the House of Commons: “Gentlemen of the House of Commons, You will be asked to make due financial provision for the effective conduct of the War.”

King George directed the last part of his address to the House of Lords: “My Lords, and Gentlemen, The only measures which will be submitted to you, at this stage of the Session, are such as seem necessary to My advisers for the attainment of the great purpose upon which the efforts of the Empire are set. I confidently commend them to your patriotism and loyalty, and I pray that the Almighty will give His blessing to your counsels.”

In the Commons, Bonar Law, the Conservative Party and Opposition leader, in reply to the King’s address, pointed out that: “Economic pressure was having its effect upon the resistance of Germany, and that if we could even maintain the measure of success which had attended our arms up to the present he believed that the effect would be infinitely greater, for it would become evident, however long the war might last, that Germany must be beaten, and the moment that was realised all the economic forces would work with a pressure of which they had no conception.” ●

LEFT: The King pictured during a visit to the Western Front in December 1914.
(US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)


He did his duty.
Will YOU do YOURS?

ABOVE: This recruitment poster, No.20 published by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, was based around Lord Roberts' death.

THE DEATH OF LORD ROBERTS

14 NOVEMBER 1914

FIELD MARSHAL Frederick Sleigh Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts VC, KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCIE, KStJ, VD, PC, was one of the most famous British soldiers of the late Victorian and early Edwardian era. In the days before Hollywood and the wealthy professional footballers, the great soldiers that had helped forge and maintain the British Empire were the popular heroes of their time.

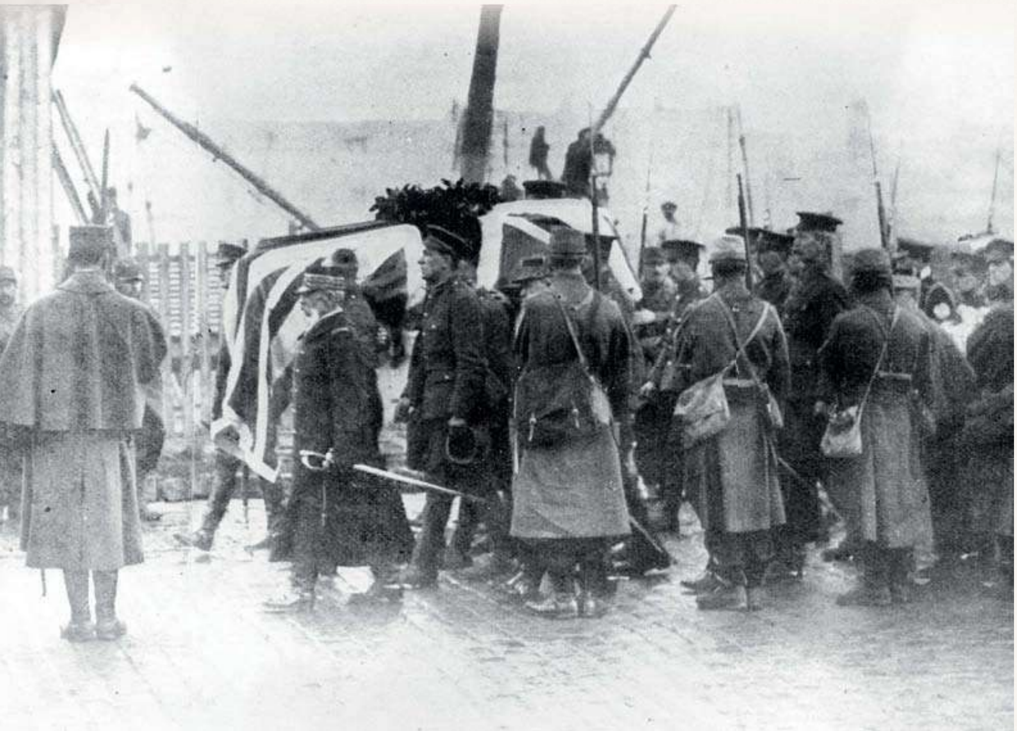
His success in the Indian sub-continent and Africa had brought his honours and titles and, eventually, he achieved the position of Commander-in-Chief of the British Army until that position was abolished in 1904. Though he retired from the Army, he continued to be an influential figure, famously warning of the threat Germany represented in a speech in 1912:

"Gentlemen, my fellow-citizens and fellow-Britishers, citizens of this great and sacred trust, this Empire, if these were my last words, I still should say to you – 'arm yourselves' and if I put to myself the question, How can I, even at this late and solemn hour, best help England, – England that to me has been so much, England that for me has done so much – again I say, 'Arm and prepare to acquit yourselves like men, for the day of your ordeal is at hand'."

He was 82-years-old when he decided, in November 1914, to travel across the Channel to inspect the soldiers in France. What then happened was reported in newspapers: "We deeply regret to announce the death of field Marshal Lord Roberts, which took place on Saturday evening at the front. Only on Thursday of last week Lord Roberts proceeded to France to see the Indian troops at present fighting at the front, of which he was Colonel-in-Chief. He contracted a chill and succumbed, after a short illness, to an attack of pneumonia. Lord Roberts was quite fit and well when he left England with Lady Aileen Roberts (his daughter) and Major Lewin, his son-in- law, on Wednesday of last week. The party had rough weather when crossing to France, but Lord Roberts showed no sign of distress upon landing. In fact, so well was he that he accomplished everything in France that he went to do.

ABOVE: Lord Roberts pictured just before the outbreak of war.

(ALL IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



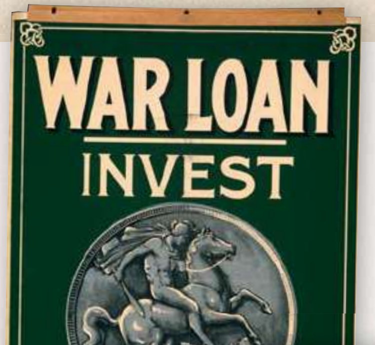
ABOVE: Lord Roberts' coffin at the quayside about to leave French soil. After lying in state in Westminster Hall (one of two non-Royals to do so during the 20th century, the other being Sir Winston Churchill), he was given a state funeral and was then buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.

"On Thursday and Friday he visited by motor car the British bases and camps, discussing affairs with the leading officers, and his Lordship's chief purpose, the inspection of the Indian troops, was also fulfilled.

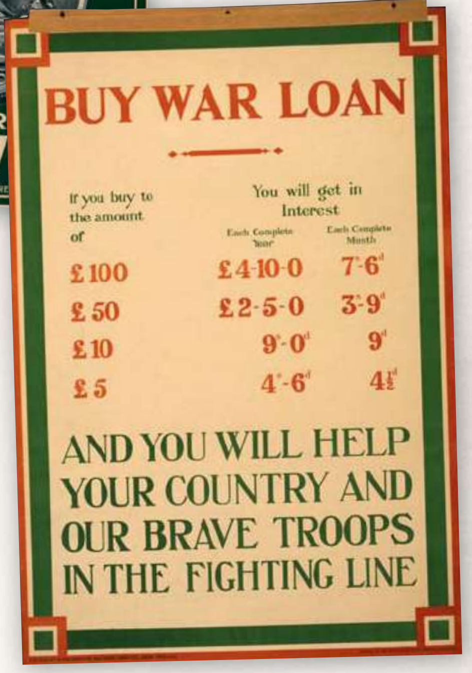
"It was not until dinner on Friday night that he complained of feeling a slight chill, and being subject to more or less trifling chest troubles, he followed his usual course and went to bed early. Usually these attacks were amenable to home treatment, but as his temperature increased rather than dropped a medical man was summoned, his diagnosis put a serious opinion that Lord Roberts was in an extremely critical condition."

Lord Roberts died at Saint-Omer on 14 November 1914. He is one of the highest ranking (Field Marshal) and oldest (82) of the First World War dead commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. ●

THE WAR BUDGET


WAR LOAN
INVEST
1915
FIVE
AND HELP YOUR
TO W
APPLY FOR DETAILS AT THE NEARE

LEFT: An early War Loan poster published by the Parliamentary War Savings Committee. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)


BUY WAR LOAN
If you buy to the amount of
You will get in Interest
Each Complete Year
Each Complete Month
£100 £4-10-0 7-6
£50 £2-5-0 3-9
£10 9-0 9
£5 4-6 4½
AND YOU WILL HELP YOUR COUNTRY AND OUR BRAVE TROOPS IN THE FIGHTING LINE

BELOW: A poster describing the interest that could be made by investing in a War Loan. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

17 NOVEMBER 1914

THE FIRST War Budget was introduced in the House of Commons on 17 November 1914. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, opened his address to the House by explaining that the war had already, in the first few months, proven to be far more expensive than had been estimated.

Lloyd George went on to add that the public "had no idea as to the costliness of the undertaking". He also stated that Britain's expenditure was higher in proportion to the forces in the field than the expenditure in any other country, the reasons for which he explained as follows:

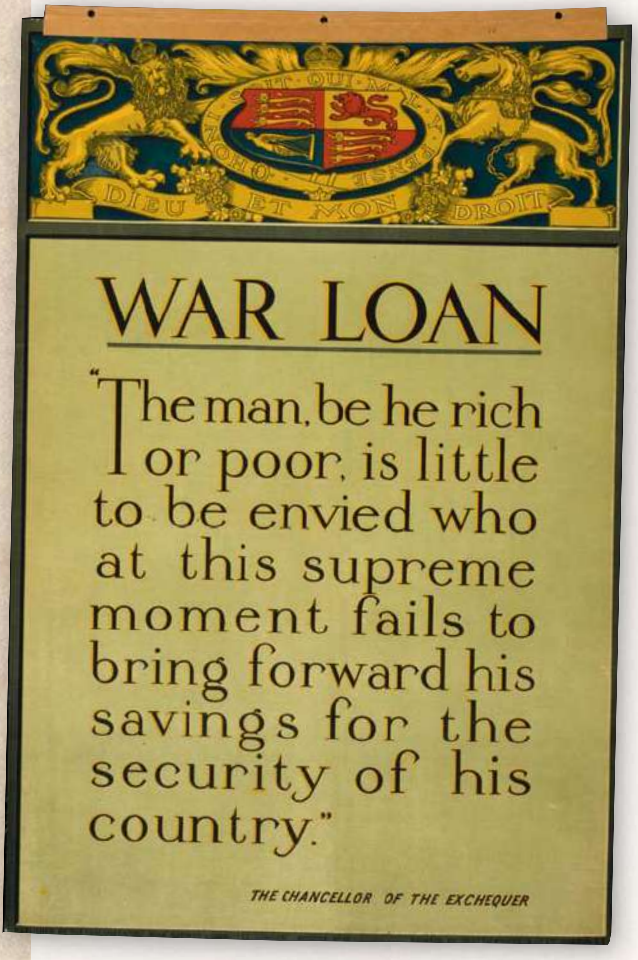
"We have at least 2,000,000 men serving the country under arms at the present moment, and, if the next million is enlisted, as I confidently anticipate it will be, in the course of the next few months, there will be 3,000,000 men under arms. It is forgotten too often that, in addition to a very considerable Army, we are maintaining a huge Navy as well. The separation allowances to our troops and to those serving in the Navy are on a more liberal scale than those of any other country in the world. I hesitate for a moment to give the actual figure, but the estimate, roughly, is that, when the million men are added to our Army, the separation allowances will cost something like £65,000,000. In addition to that, the pay of the Army is considerably higher."

As a consequence, Lloyd George estimated that the Treasury would be short by £11,350,000 in the 1914/15 financial year. In order to put the expenditure into context, he compared the First World War to previous conflicts. The Crimean War, the Chancellor said, cost £67,500,000, which was spread over three financial years. The Boer War, on the other hand, cost £211,000,000, a sum which was spread over four financial years, whereas the first full year of the then current war was expected to be at least £450,000,000.

There was a consequent need to increase taxes. Income tax was increased, as were indirect taxes, especially that on beer. The reason for this is that the standard strength beer was 9 or 10% proof which represented approximately 3.25 gallons of proof spirit to the barrel. Charged as beer, it was taxed at 7s. 9d. A similar quantity of spirit sold as spirit would be charged at £2 7s. 10d. As a result the tax on beer was increased by 17s. 3d. per barrel.

The Chancellor then declared that it was "obviously out of the question to raise the whole of this sum of money by taxation". He proposed, therefore, a general subscription War Loan of £350,000,000 at a rate of 3.5% interest. This figure was achieved, but because the bonds were sold at a discount the actual nett amount raised was £330,000,000.

Indeed, on 27 November 1914, it was announced that the War Loan was oversubscribed. *The Spectator* had the following to say in its issue published the following day: "That the war loan would be a success was so widely assumed in advance that the public may not fully appreciate what a remarkable achievement this success has been. In the first place, the amount of the loan was absolutely unprecedented. The sum asked for is almost exactly half of the total National Debt of the United Kingdom, so that at one swoop we are increasing our National Debt by fifty per cent. The second important point to note is that this operation has taken place at a time when the whole world is spending at an exceptional rate, and when a large part of the world is borrowing with equal rapidity." ●

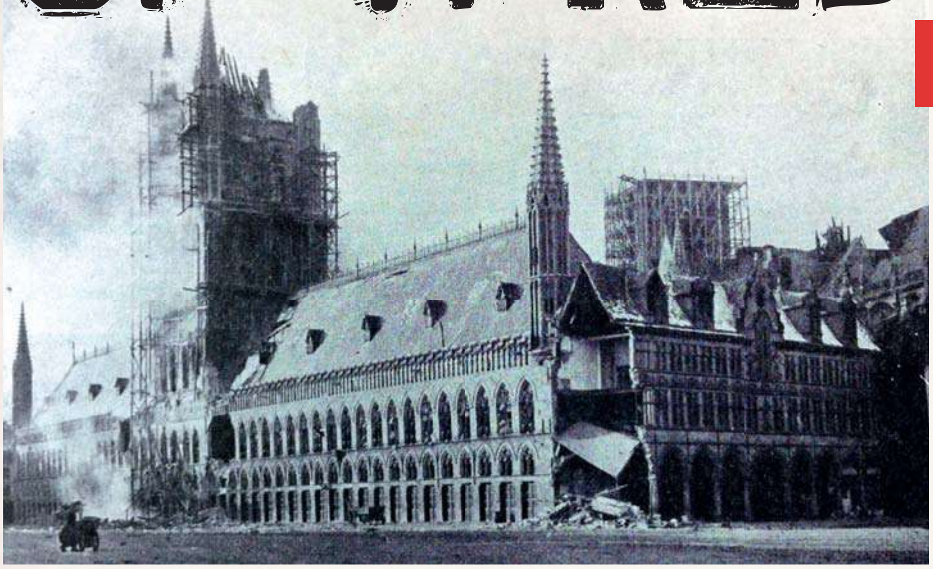

HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE
DIEU ET MON DROIT
WAR LOAN
"The man, be he rich or poor, is little to be envied who at this supreme moment fails to bring forward his savings for the security of his country."
THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

ABOVE: Another early War Loan poster published by the Parliamentary War Savings Committee. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE END OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

ABOVE: **General Erich von Falkenhayn.**

22 NOVEMBER 1914



ABOVE: **Over the coming months and years, Ypres' impressive Cloth Hall, and the whole of the city, would gradually be destroyed.** (HMP)

AFTER THE German effort on 20 October to take Ypres had failed, a renewed assault upon Haig's I Corps was taken up over the following days. Haig was forced to give ground. Further to the west General Erich von Falkenhayn tried to turn the Allied flank by attacking the Belgian Army positioned on the River Yser. The Belgians fought well but could not hope to hold the Germans for long. They had, though, another plan.

On 27 October 1914, the Belgian King Albert I ordered the sluice gates to be opened and the sea poured across the flat land. An area twenty miles long and two miles wide was inundated, creating an impassable barrier, which finally ended German hopes of outflanking the Allied positions.

All that Falkenhayn could do now was concentrate all his strength against the BEF around Ypres in the hope that he could break through the thin British ranks. With the 4th and 6th armies at his disposal, Falkenhayn had a clear numerical advantage and on 31 October 1914, the first large-scale assault began.

The British were driven off the Messines ridge to the south of Ypres. After solidifying their gains, the Germans then launched a major assault on 11 November, fully expecting to take Ypres that day. At what would become known as the Battle of Nonne Bosschen, the attacking Prussian Guards were held by the Guards Brigade before being counter-attacked by the 2nd Battalion, Ox & Bucks Light Infantry. Also involved that day was 5th Field Company, Royal Engineers. "At nine we suddenly have to take up arms," recalled Corporal A. Letyford of the 5th Field Company. "We man an old trench in the rear of the wood. The enemy approach and we begin to bowl them over. After a while we charge and drive them nearly back to their original position. About 110 of us in the charge against some hundreds of Prussian Guard. We suffer rather severely."

One of the heaviest attacks was delivered against the hamlet of Hooge where Corporal John Lucy of the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles was again in the action: "The trenches were filled with the acrid smell of shell smoke. Heavy shrapnel burst right down on us, its pall of smoke roofing the trench and blotting out the sky. I was flung about by the concussion, and thrown flat against the trench bottom. My whole body sang and trembled. One ear was perforated by the concussion, and I could hardly hear."

With the German 4th Division and the Prussian Guards – some 10,000 men in twelve battalions – set to attack, the Royal Irish Rifles manned the broken parapet of their shallow trench. They were outnumbered three to one by the Germans but they offered enough resistance to blunt the attack which then stalled.

Though the battle still had a few more days to run, it had become apparent to Falkenhayn that he was never going to be able to capture Ypres that year. The fighting finally ended on 22 November 1914, with the onset of winter. ●

ABOVE: **The issue of hot cocoa to men of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards near Ypres-Menin Road, October 1914.** (IWM; Q57250)

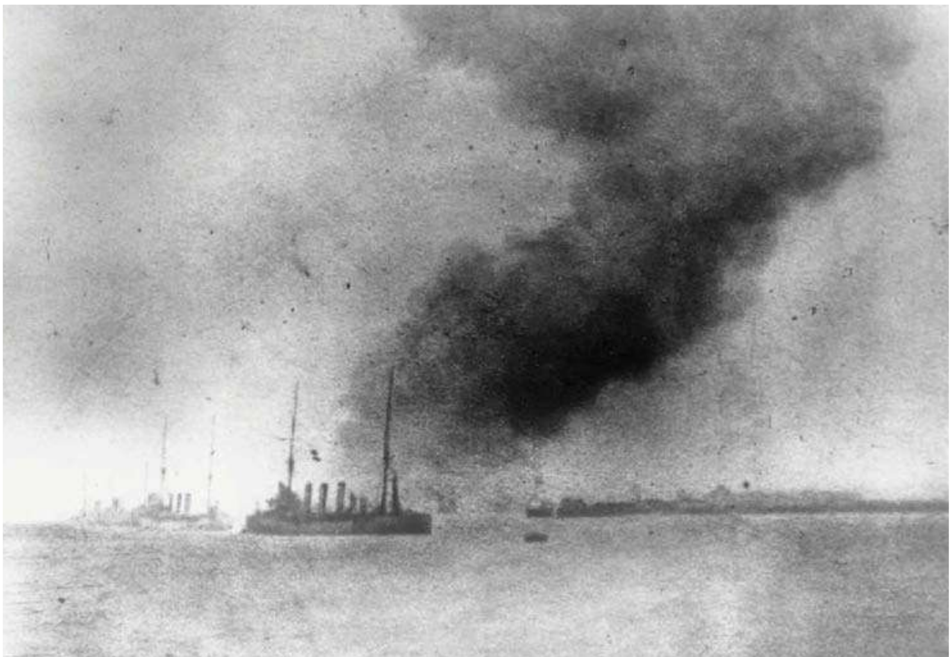
THE BULWARK DISASTER

26 NOVEMBER 1914

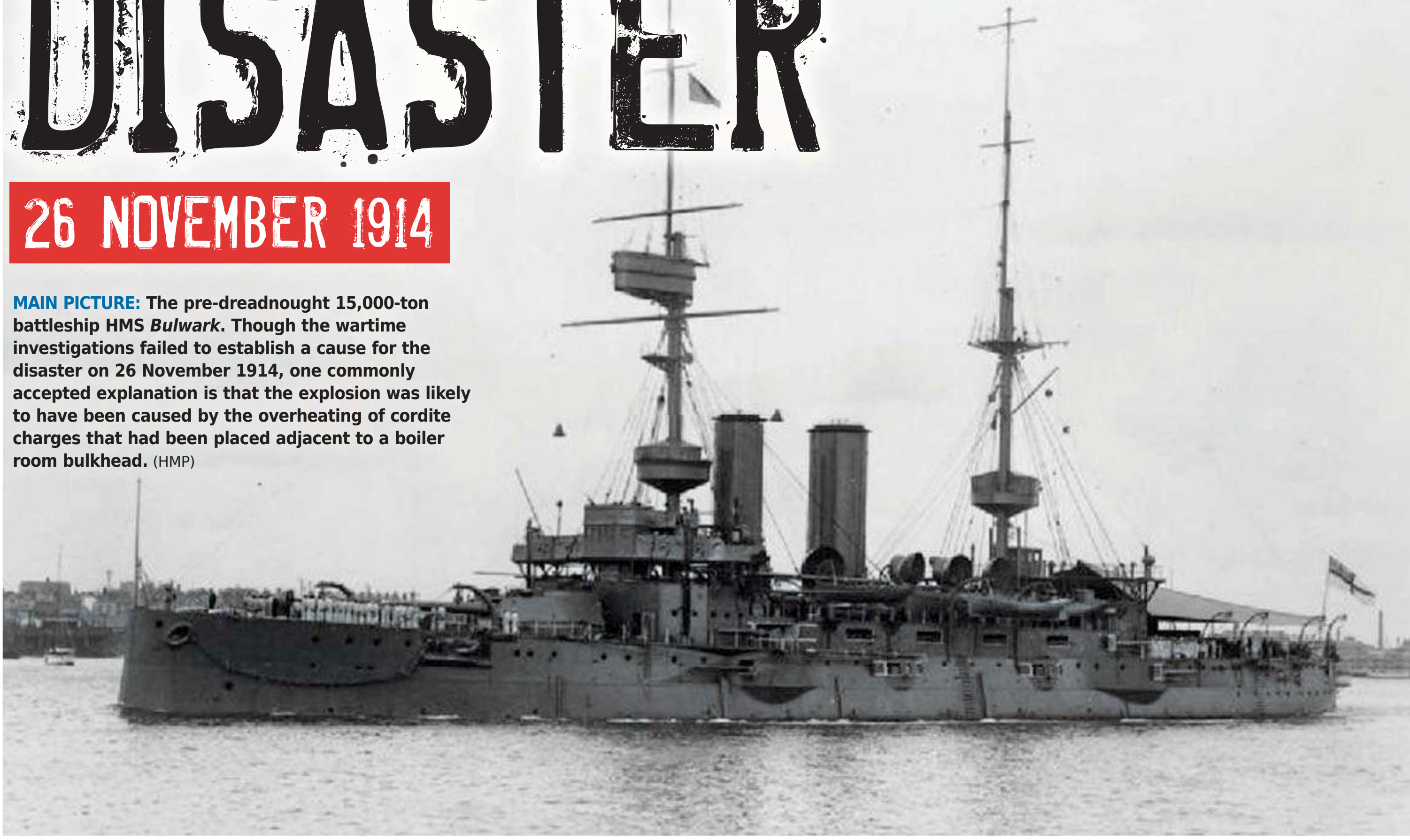
THE PRE-DREADNOUGHT 15,000-ton battleship HMS *Bulwark* formed part of the 5th Battle Squadron which, since the outbreak of war, had been assigned the task of defending Home waters. The squadron, which included seven other similar-vintage battleships, patrolled between Start Point and Dover at an economical speed, stopping off at the Isle of Wight when necessary to re-coal.

On 14 November 1914, the 5th Battle Squadron was transferred to Sheerness to guard against a possible German invasion of south-east England. It was there, on 26 November 1914, that *Bulwark* was moored at No.17 buoy in Kethole Reach, some four-and-a-half miles west of Sheerness in the estuary of the River Medway.

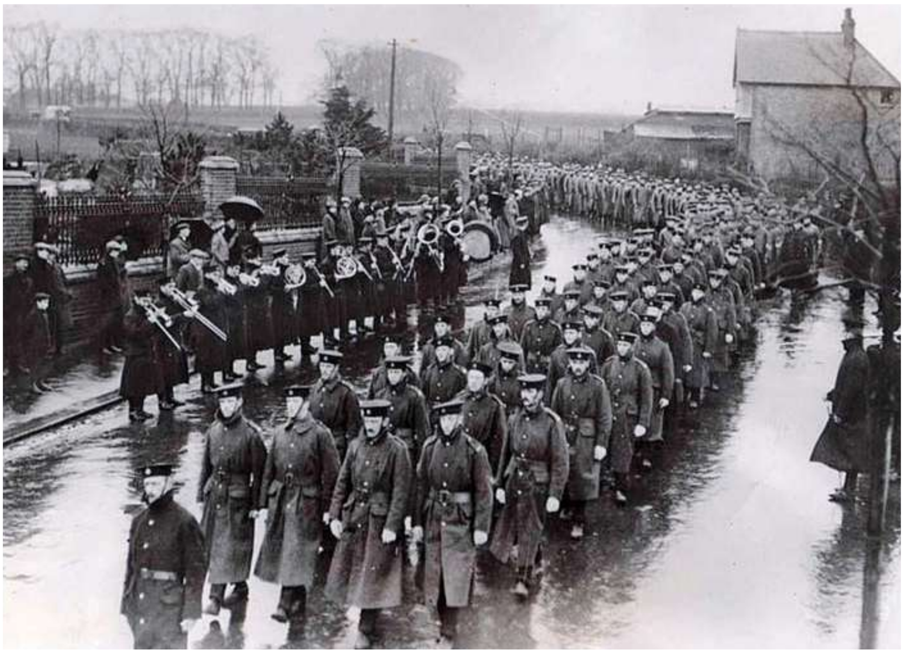
"That day, as all days at 8 am, we were indicating by flags the state of coal, provisions and water," recalled Signalman Eric Peacock on board HMS *Irresistible*. "It so happened that *Bulwark*'s hoist was a bit adrift and so we were watching her. As her flag reached the top, there was a terrific explosion and then the startling realisation that *Bulwark* was no longer there, just an open space between



Disaster at Sheerness – a pall of smoke hangs over the spot where HMS *Bulwark* had been moored at the time of the explosion. This is the view from HMS *Queen*. (IWM; SP2912)



MAIN PICTURE: The pre-dreadnought 15,000-ton battleship HMS *Bulwark*. Though the wartime investigations failed to establish a cause for the disaster on 26 November 1914, one commonly accepted explanation is that the explosion was likely to have been caused by the overheating of cordite charges that had been placed adjacent to a boiler room bulkhead. (HMP)



ABOVE: **Royal Marines marching through Gillingham on at the end of November 1914. They are, the original caption states, “part of the gigantic funeral procession which took place for the victims” of HMS *Bulwark*.** (HMP)

ABOVE: **The *Bulwark* memorial which, commemorating some of those who lost their lives on 26 November 1914, can be seen in Woodlands Road Cemetery, Gillingham, as part of the Naval Burial Ground.** (BOTH COURTESY OF RUTH MITCHELL)

adjacent ships, clam water and bits and pieces floating. It was devastating.”

Another person also described the disaster: “I was at breakfast when I heard an explosion, and I went on deck. My first impression was that the report was produced by the firing of a salute by one of the ships, but the noise was quite exceptional.

“When I got on deck I soon saw that something awful had happened. The water and sky were obscured by dense volumes of smoke. We were at once ordered to the scene of the disaster to render what assistance we could. At first we could see nothing, but when the smoke cleared a bit we were horrified to find the battleship *Bulwark* had gone. She seemed to have entirely vanished from sight, but a little later we detected a portion of the huge vessel showing about 4ft above water. We kept a vigilant look-out for the unfortunate crew, but only saw two men.”

The explosion was heard in Whitstable, twenty miles away, and in Southend where the pier was shaken by the explosion but not damaged. Residents in Westcliffe-on-Sea claimed they saw “a dense volume of greenish smoke which lasted for about ten minutes”. The nearby areas of Sheerness and Rainham took the brunt of the blast with reports of damage to property being made, with fragments of personal items from the ship falling down in the streets of Sheerness.

The destruction of HMS *Bulwark* was also witnessed on board HMS *Formidable*: “When Athe dust and wreckage had finally settled a limp object was seen hanging from the wireless aerials upon which it had fallen. With difficulty the object was retrieved and found to be an officer’s uniform jacket with three gold bands on the sleeves and between them the purple cloth of an engineer officer. The garment’s former owner had been blasted into fragments.”

Another witness was on HMS *Implacable*, the next ship in line at the mooring, and he reported that, “a huge pillar of black cloud belched upwards … From the depths of this writhing column flames appeared running *down* to sea level. The appearance of this dreadful phenomenon was followed by a thunderous roar. Then came a series of lesser detonations, and finally one vast explosion that shook the *Implacable* from mastheads to keel.”

Boats of all kinds were launched from the nearby ships and shore to pick up survivors and the dead. Work was hampered by the amount of debris which included hammocks, furniture, boxes and hundreds of mutilated bodies.

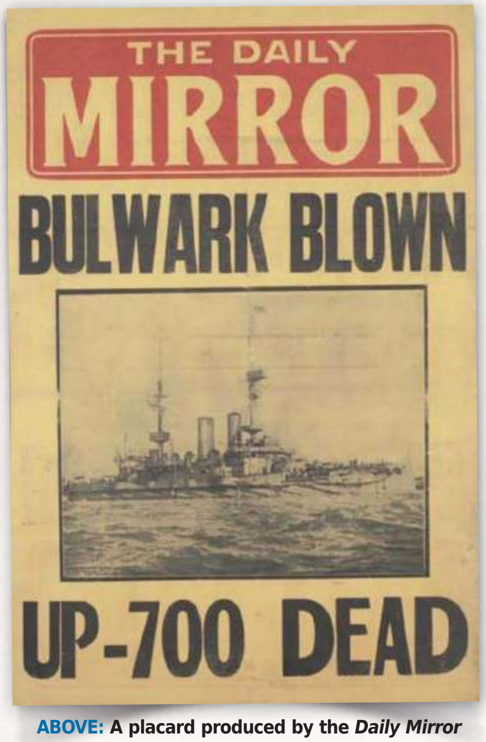
Out of *Bulwark*’s complement of 750, fourteen men were recovered alive, though two of them subsequently died of their injuries. Most of the survivors were seriously injured.

The only men to survive the explosion comparatively unscathed were those who had been in No.1 mess-deck amidships; they were blown out of an open hatch. One of these men, Able Seaman Stephen Marshall, described feeling the sensation of “a colossal draught”, being drawn “irresistibly upwards”, and, as he rose in the air, clearly seeing the ship’s masts shaking violently. He fell clear of the debris and managed to swim to wreckage and keep himself afloat until he was rescued. His injuries were slight.

Rescue work continued during the remainder of the week. On Saturday, 28 November 1914, an inquest was opened at the Royal Naval Hospital in Chatham. This was adjourned until the results of a Court of Inquiry into the disaster were known.

When re-opened on 16 December 1914, Rear-Admiral Gaunt stated that there was no evidence to suggest that the source of the explosion was external. There was also no evidence of treachery or of loose cordite.

When pressed for the cause of the explosion, Gaunt replied that “there were many possible causes, but no direct evidence and there have been many theories which are untrue”. The jury was not satisfied and a juror asked the question again, “We should like to know how ignition occurred?” The Coroner replied, “That is precisely what we cannot solve”. ●



THE DAILY
MIRROR
BULWARK BLOWN
UP-700 DEAD

ABOVE: **A placard produced by the *Daily Mirror* announcing the disaster that befell HMS *Bulwark*. On 29 November 1914 divers sent to find the wreck reported that the ship’s port bow as far aft as the sick bay had been blown off by the explosion and lay fifty feet east of the mooring. The starboard bow lay thirty feet further away. The remainder of the ship had been torn apart so violently that no other large portions of the wreck could be found.** (IWM; PST12967)

THE GERMAN cruiser *Königsberg*, which had sunk HMS *Pegasus* on 19 September (see page 62), had retired to the Rufiji river to overhaul her engines. A Royal Navy squadron led by the Canopus-class pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Goliath* was despatched to East Africa to hunt her down. When *Königsberg* was discovered in the Rufiji, a small force blockaded the estuary of the river.

Though *Königsberg* was trapped, it was always possible that she might escape. *Königsberg* had previously been operating out of Dar es Salaam and whilst the German Governor Heinrich Schnee had declared that neither the harbour nor its ships would be used for military purposes, it was felt that if any of the German vessels in Dar es Salaam took to sea they would be able to take supplies and fuel down to *Königsberg*. To prevent this, Admiral Herbert King-Hall decided to immobilise the ships in the harbour.

ABOVE: **Commander Henry Peel Ritchie.** (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

Located there were the German cargo ships SS *König* and SS *Feldmarschall*, the hospital ship SS *Tabora* and several smaller coastal vessels. To prevent any large British warships from entering Dar es Salaam, the Germans had sunk a floating dock at the harbour entrance. As *Goliath* was unable to undertake a close bombardment, King-Hall decided to send in raiding parties to immobilise or sink the German vessels. Command of the raid was entrusted to *Goliath*'s second most senior officer, Commander Henry Peel Ritchie.

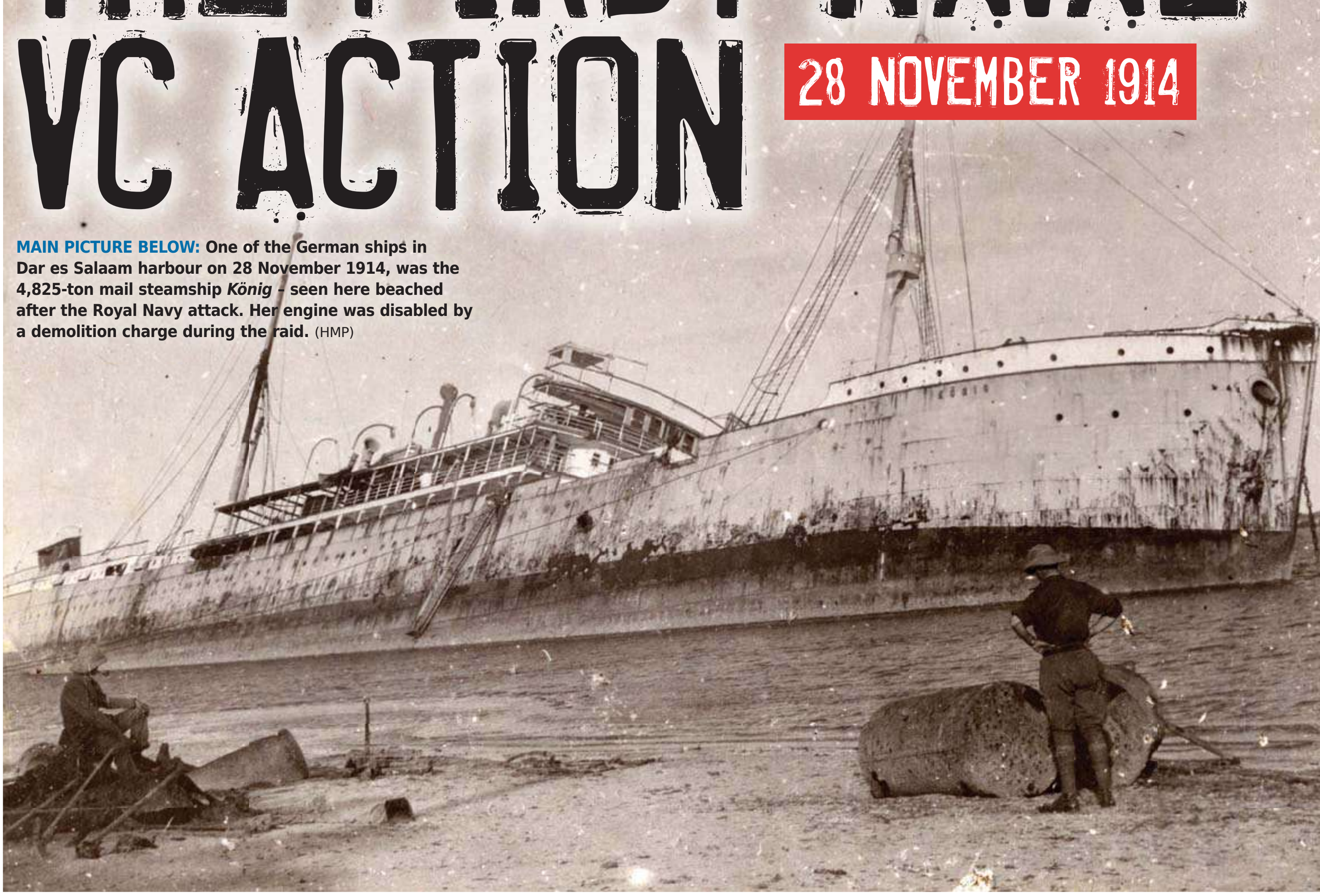
Ritchie was given command of the small auxiliary gunboats, *Duplex* and *Helmuth*, plus other boats, to carry his raiding parties. The German authorities were warned in advance that the local agreement concerning Dar es Salaam and the vessels in its port was not recognised by the British Government and that therefore steps would be taken to disable the German ships.

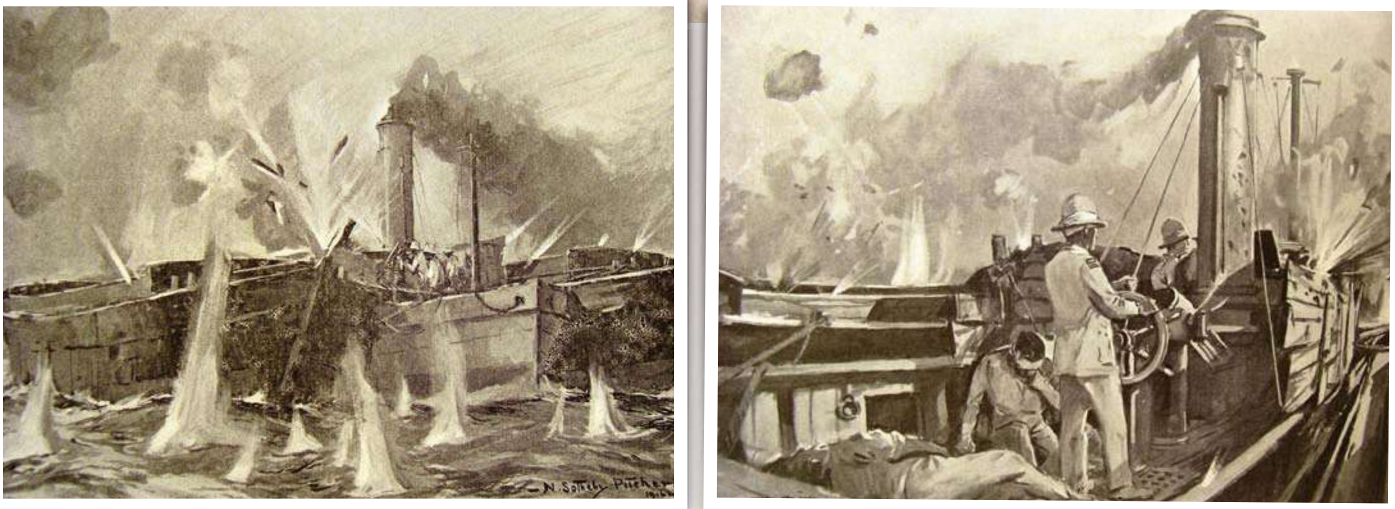
The raid began at 10.00 hours on 28 November 1914. From the outset things began to go wrong. Firstly *Duplex* broke down and then *Goliath*'s picket boat became stranded on a reef.

THE FIRST NAVAL VC ACTION

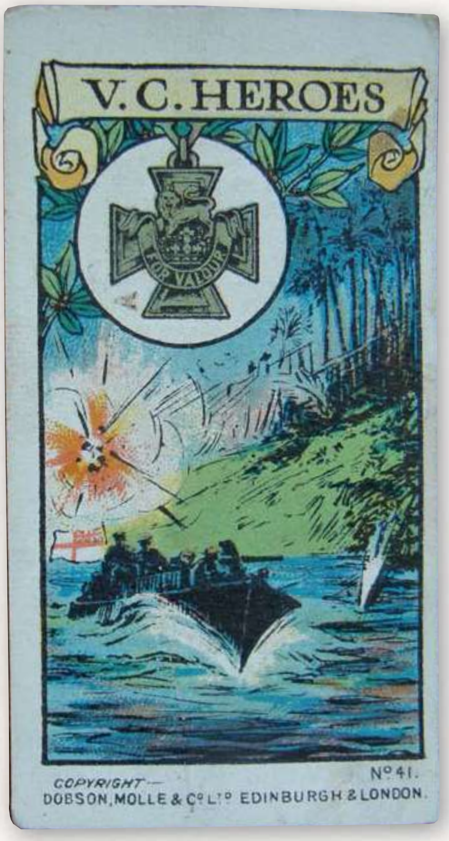
28 NOVEMBER 1914

MAIN PICTURE BELOW: **One of the German ships in Dar es Salaam harbour on 28 November 1914, was the 4,825-ton mail steamship *König* – seen here beached after the Royal Navy attack. Her engine was disabled by a demolition charge during the raid.** (HMP)





ABOVE, LEFT and RIGHT: Two drawings depicting part of the action for which Commander Henry Peel Ritchie was awarded the Victoria Cross. On the left, his craft is seen coming under heavy fire, whilst on the right Ritchie has taken the wheel himself. (BOTH COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)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ABOVE: A cigarette card depicting Commander Henry Peel Ritchie's VC action. (COURTESY OF STEVE SNELLING)

Nevertheless, Ritchie continued on in the other boats and *König* and *Feldmarschall* were boarded. Ritchie then steamed on to deal with another German ship, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. He found no crew on board but he did see several clips of Mauser rifle bullets. "It was decidedly suspicious," Ritchie later said.

Ritchie's party then set demolition charges and went to destroy a floating crane and other vessels, the remaining boats of the raiding party having just set off back to *Goliath*. As he returned past *König* and *Feldmarschall* there was no longer any sign of the crew. At that moment, the German sailors, who had hidden themselves ashore, opened fire, as Captain Caulfield on *Helmuth* recalled: "Bullets were raining over and into the boat and through and against the thin iron plates rigged on either side of the boiler and around the coxswain."

Helmuth managed to escape the fusillade, leaving Ritchie's little pinnace the sole target of the German guns onshore. "We realised that the pinnace could hardly survive such heavy fire as *Helmuth* had experienced," wrote Lieutenant C.J. Charlewood, "but we were confident that the Commander would not surrender without a fight".

As Ritchie tried to run for the harbour entrance, he saw a small boat shoving off from the hospital ship *Tabora* which had been inspected by Surgeon Holtom to check her credentials as a hospital ship. Ritchie changed course to pick up Surgeon Holtom just as gunfire opened up on him from both sides of the creek. "I could not get alongside of Surgeon Holtom owing to the difficulty of steering, and the boat swinging round on its own axis," Ritchie explained. So Ritchie decided to leave Holtom behind and press on "with the object of drawing all the fire on the steam pinnace".

Ritchie certainly succeeded, the small boat being repeatedly hit by machine-gun and rifle fire. "Bullets whistled overhead," wrote Petty Officer T. Clark. "Some rattled against the iron plates which had been rigged for the protection of the boilers and myself by the wheel amidships. Others shattered the woodwork ... Cdr Ritchie sat calmly in the boat alongside myself through it all until a piece of shell struck his arm and he doubled up with a groan."

Clark was hit and the man that took his place at the helm, Able Seaman Upton, was also wounded. "It was now clear that only by means of skilful handling would the little pinnace negotiate the most difficult part of the channel which lay ahead, and Cdr Ritchie, although he had been wounded several times since he was struck by the first piece of shell and was suffering great pain, scrambled towards the wheel and himself took charge of the steering operations."

The pinnace was soon a virtual wreck. Most of the crew had been wounded and gunfire was still pouring in on her. Still, though, the little boat moved closer to the harbour entrance, beyond which *Goliath* and *Fox* were bombarding the port. Then Ritchie was hit again, this time in the leg. He sank to the deck, no longer able to steer the boat. He had, though, taken her through the worst of the fire and saved most of the crew.

Many of those that had taken part in the raid and the desperate retreat were decorated for their gallantry. For Ritchie, this meant the award of the Victoria Cross. His was the first VC action of the Great War. ●

BELOW: A view of the harbour at Dar es Salaam taken just prior to the First World War. The small warship in the centre of the image is the unprotected cruiser *SMS Seeadler*. (COURTESY OF KOLONIALES BILDARCHIV)

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Lieutenant Colonel Richard West VC, DSO & BAR, MC

Richard West's bravery was matched only by his leadership skills: both qualities resulted in him being awarded four gallantry awards during the final year of the First World War. As Lord Ashcroft recounts in the latest of his "Hero of the Month" series, West was at his most inspirational when the odds were against him and his men.

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THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

8 DECEMBER 1914

STILL REELING from the defeat at the Battle of Coronel (see page 85), the Admiralty despatched a large Royal Navy force to intercept the victorious German cruiser squadron. After their decisive victory, the German warships, under Vice-Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee, had been ordered to head for home.

Von Spee, however, decided to make one "call" on the way – at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands. His intention had been to destroy the radio station located there and take the Governor prisoner as an act of a reprisal for the British capture of the German governor of Samoa.

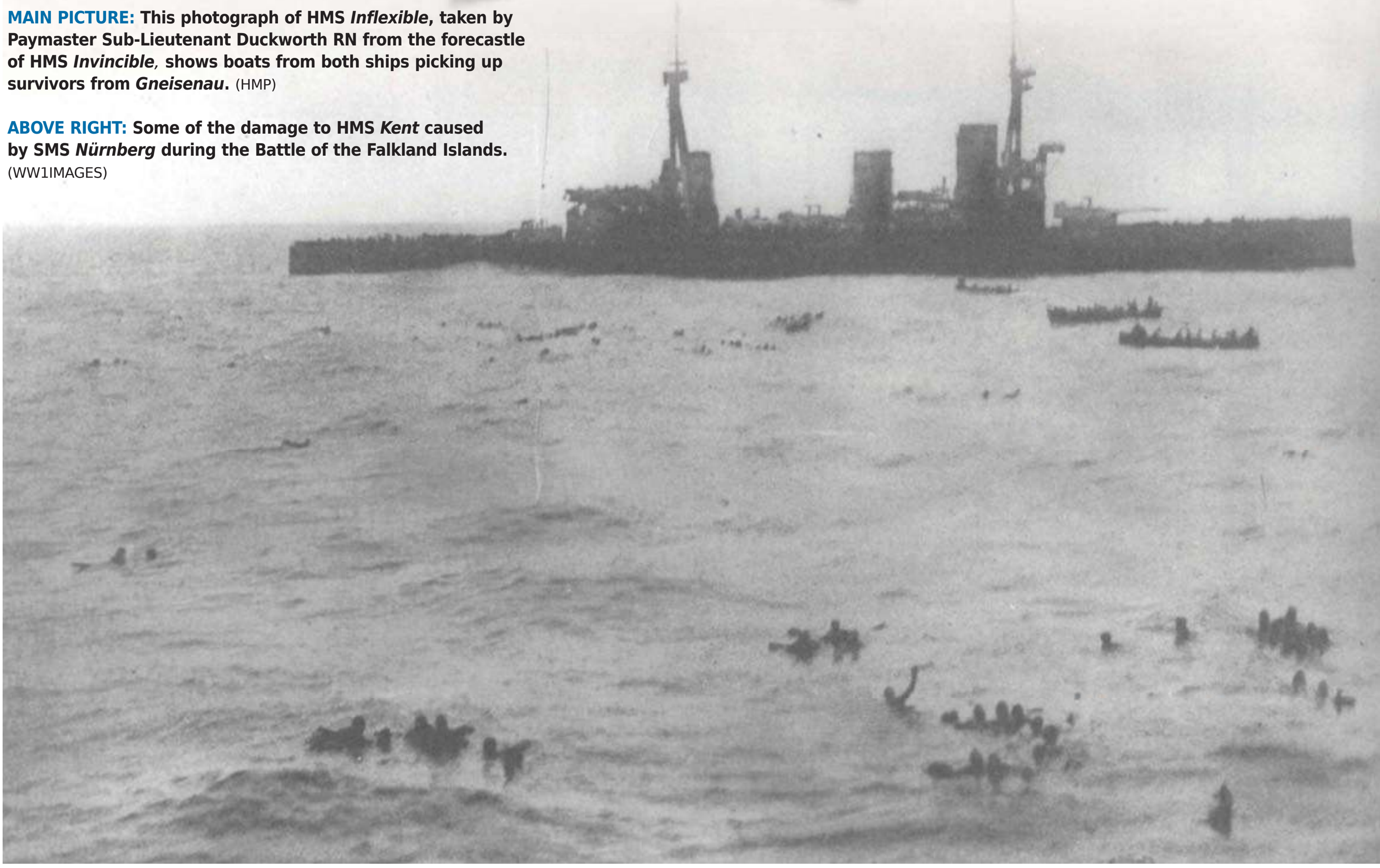
Unknown to Admiral Spee as he headed for the Falklands, a British naval squadron, including the two battlecruisers HMS *Invincible* and HMS *Inflexible*, had arrived there on Monday, 7 December 1914. This force also contained HMS *Carnarvon* (an improved Devonshire-class armoured cruiser), the Monmouth-class armoured cruisers *Cornwall* and *Kent*, HMS *Bristol* (a Town-class light cruiser) and the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Macedonia*. All were under the command of Admiral Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee.

The morning of 8 December 1914, however, found the entire British force, with only the odd exception, at anchor and busy coaling. They were very nearly caught out.

The obsolete pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Canopus* had been moored (in fact it was resting on the mud) in such a position as

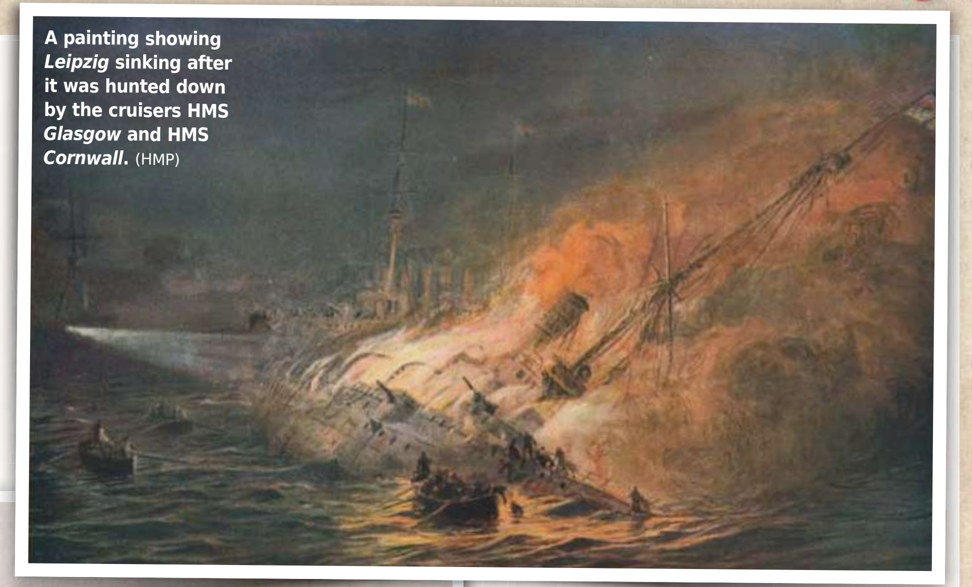
MAIN PICTURE: This photograph of HMS *Inflexible*, taken by Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant Duckworth RN from the forecastle of HMS *Invincible*, shows boats from both ships picking up survivors from *Gneisenau*. (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT: Some of the damage to HMS *Kent* caused by SMS *Nürnberg* during the Battle of the Falkland Islands. (WW1IMAGES)

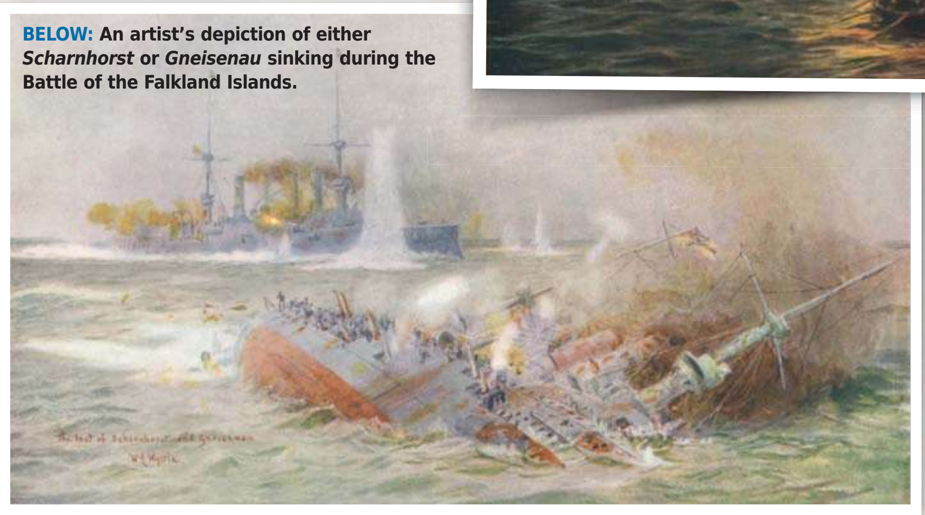


to command the entrance to the harbour at Stanley. Hidden from German view behind a hill, when the enemy warships were sighted, *Canopus* opened fire. Her actions were enough to check the German cruisers' advance. To many she had ultimately ensured British success in the coming battle.

Had the Germans attacked at this point, the British warships would be stationary targets. If any warship was sunk whilst leaving port, the rest of the squadron would be trapped. Sturdee, however, kept calm, ordered steam to be raised and then went and had breakfast.



A painting showing *Leipzig* sinking after it was hunted down by the cruisers HMS *Glasgow* and HMS *Cornwall*. (HMP)



BELOW: **An artist's depiction of either *Scharnhorst* or *Gneisenau* sinking during the Battle of the Falkland Islands.**

The sight of the masts of the British battlecruisers confirmed to the Germans that they were facing a better equipped enemy. HMS *Kent*, which was already making way out of the harbour, was ordered to follow them as they turned away.

"The men smacked about splendidly and things fairly hummed," recalled Engineer Lieutenant Commander J. Fraser Shaw on HMS *Invincible*. "We got our oil fuel ready at once and as soon as any boiler was lit we smacked the oil fuel in at once. The result was that about 9.50 or 9.55am we started moving – and by 10.10 were going 18 knots." The chase was on.

ABOVE: **The memorial to the Battle of the Falkland Islands located in Stanley. Upon their return to Stanley harbour on 11 December, the British fleet received a tremendous ovation from the population, most of whom had watched part of the battle from Stanley Common.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF MARY LOOSEMORE)

"We are almost sure that one of our first shots struck the *Nürnberg* in the stern as she dropped out of line quite early on," continued Shaw. "When the [enemy] line broke up, the *Inflexible*, ourselves and *Carnarvon* went after the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* who kept together. The *Kent* went for the *Nürnberg* and sank her and we heard later that the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* sank the *Leipzig* between them."

Realising that they were unable to escape the pursing Royal Navy warships, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* turned to fight, letting their escorting light cruisers slip away. In the face of the accurate British bombardment, *Scharnhorst* soon received over fifty hits, three funnels were down, and she was on fire and listing. The range kept falling and at 16.04 hours, *Scharnhorst* listed suddenly to port. Just thirteen minutes later she had disappeared.

Whilst *Scharnhorst* was sinking, *Gneisenau* had continued to fire. She was able to evade the British until 17.15 hours by which time her ammunition was exhausted. *Gneisenau* sank at 18.02 hours; just 190 survivors were rescued from the water.

Nürnberg, meanwhile, was still running at full speed, the crew of the pursuing HMS *Kent* was pushing its boilers and engines to the limit. *Nürnberg* finally turned to battle at 17.30 hours. *Kent* had the advantage in shell weight and armour. *Nürnberg* suffered two boiler explosions an hour later, giving the advantage in speed and manoeuvre to *Kent*. After a long chase *Nürnberg* rolled over and sank at 19.27 hours.

The cruisers *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* had also chased down *Leipzig*. *Glasgow* closed to finish the German warship which had run out of ammunition. When the latter fired two flares, *Glasgow* halted fire. At 21.23 hours, at a spot more than eighty miles south-east of the Falkland Islands, *Leipzig* also rolled over, leaving just eighteen survivors.

ABOVE: **The two battlecruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, pictured from another of the Royal Navy squadron, in pursuit of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*.** (HMP)

The Battle of the Falkland Islands had been a decisive confrontation. Not one of the British warships was sunk – let alone badly damaged. Just ten British sailors or Marines were killed and a further nineteen wounded.

By contrast, the German force had been ravaged. Some 1,871 German sailors were killed in the encounter, including Admiral Spee and his two sons. A further 215 survivors were rescued. Not one of the 765 officers and men from the *Scharnhorst* survived. Of the known German force of eight ships, only two escaped: the auxiliary *Seydlitz* and the light cruiser *Dresden*.

The most important outcome of the battle, however, was the fact that commerce raiding on the high seas by regular warships of the Imperial German Navy came to an abrupt end. ●

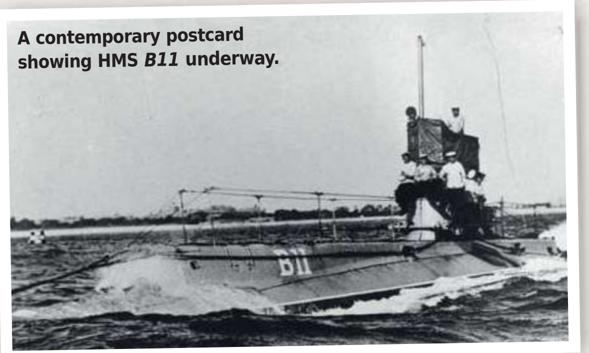
GALLANTRY IN THE DARDANELLES

A portrait of Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook VC.
(IWM; Q114630)

13 DECEMBER 1914

THE ROYAL Navy had begun the First World War with the world's largest submarine fleet, sixty-two boats in total, though only fifteen were ocean-going, the rest being coastal boats unsuitable for long distance patrols. Indeed, submarines were the first British naval units to go out to face the enemy in 1914 and the last to return to port in 1918.

One of the first to be deployed was HMS *B11*. Launched in 1906, HMS *B11* was the last of the British B-class submarines to be built. The outbreak of war found her based at Malta commanded by Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook RN (who had taken command at the end of December 1913). In September 1914 HMS *B11* was ordered to the island of Tenedos to join the vessels monitoring the entrance of the Dardanelles.

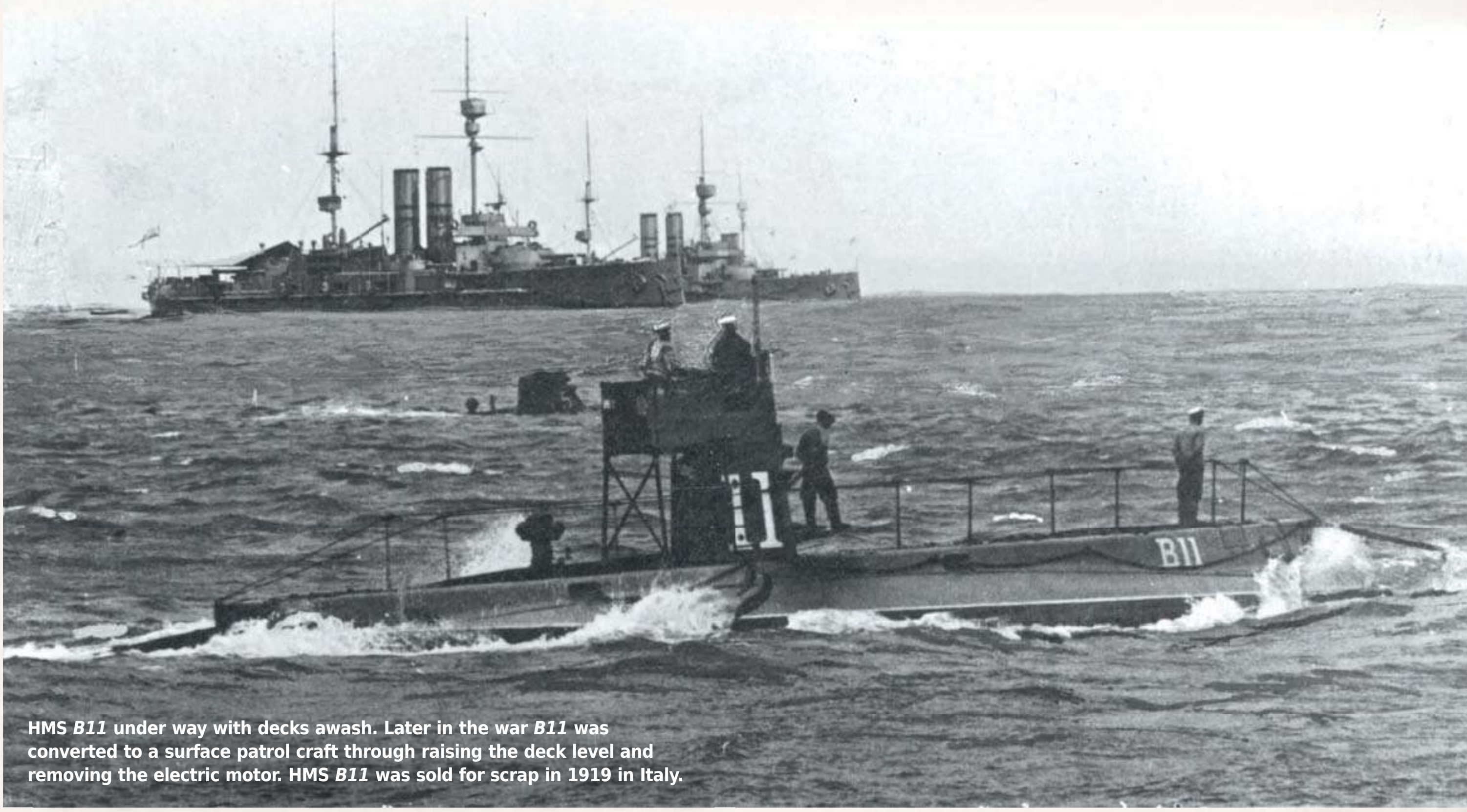


A contemporary postcard showing HMS *B11* underway.

On 13 December 1914, "after proceeding some distance through the Dardanelles, the submarine [*B11*] entered the danger zone". Holbrook's target was the Turkish battleship *Mesudiye* which had been anchored near Chanak as a stationary guard ship. His announcement of the award of the Victoria Cross, published in *The London Gazette* on 22 December 1914, takes up the story:

"Notwithstanding the very difficult current, [Holbrook] dived his vessel under five rows of mines, and torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Mesudiye*, which was guarding the minefield. Lieutenant Holbrook succeeded in bringing the B.11 safely back, although assailed by gun-fire and torpedo boats, having been submerged on one occasion for nine hours."

In his subsequent report, Holbrook wrote: "I was able to see track of torpedo going straight for ship, but the submarine dipped before torpedo hit ... Immediately after the explosion the boat came up sufficiently to put the periscope above water, the vessel was then on my starbd beam and opened fire from a number of guns. The boat then dipped and when I got her up again ... I had the vessel on my port bow and she appeared to me to be settling down by the stern; no more guns were fired."



HMS *B11* under way with decks awash. Later in the war *B11* was converted to a surface patrol craft through raising the deck level and removing the electric motor. HMS *B11* was sold for scrap in 1919 in Italy.

ABOVE: Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook VC of HMS *B11*, pictured on board HMS *Adamant*. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; G00453)

The torpedo, fired at a range of 800 yards, struck *Mesudiye* just as the ship's crew had gathered below deck for lunch. However, alert lookouts spotted the torpedo's track, as well as *B11*'s periscope, and sounded the alarm. The impact and explosion of the first torpedo caused *Mesudiye* to heel severely; just seven minutes later the stricken battleship rolled over and sank, her ruptured side showing above the shallow water. Remarkably, given the speed of her demise, only thirty-seven men (ten officers and twenty-seven men) were killed from a crew of nearly 700. Many of the survivors were released through holes cut in the exposed hull.

Those on the submarine also had their own problems. "Honestly speaking," confided Leading Seaman Wilfred Mortimer, "there was not a man expected to see daylight again when we went below on the Sunday morning to dive ... It was a 9 hours' wonder, expecting to be blown up any minute." The time that *B11* had spent submerged whilst escaping from the Dardanelles, during which time Holbrook said that "the foulness of the air was not noticeable" (though Mortimer recalled that the gasses from the batteries had left the majority of the crew "as sick as dogs"), was a record for a B-class submarine.

Holbrook continued to serve in submarines for most of the rest of the war, until he began to suffer severe bouts of seasickness. He retired from the Royal Navy in 1920.

For his actions that fateful December day, Norman Holbrook gained the distinction of being both the first naval VC winner of the First World War to be gazetted and the recipient of the first Victoria Cross ever awarded to a submariner. He was typically understated about his actions. Writng to Commodore Roger Keyes, the then Head of the Submarine Service, shortly after the attack, he remarked: "I feel that the great distinction conferred upon me is too much for the small service I have rendered, as the *Messudiyeh* [*sic*] was a very old ship & not much of a loss to the Turks."

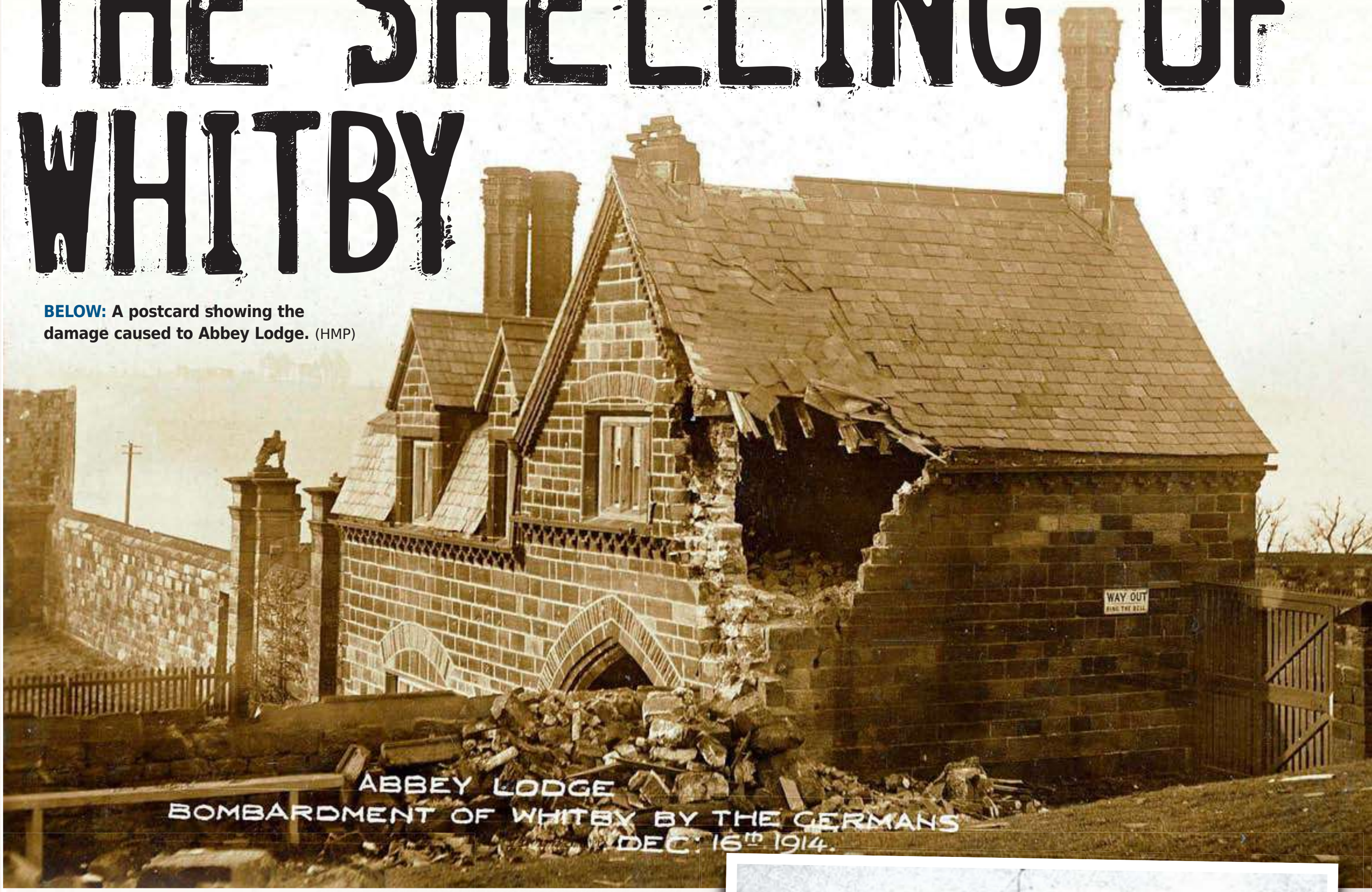
The rest of *B11's* crew were also decorated. Holbrook's second-in-command, Lieutenant Sidney Winn, was awarded a Distinguished Service Order, whilst every other man received the Distinguished Service Medal. Holbrook is probably the only VC recipient to have a town (and until May 2004) a local government area named after him.

Amid a wave of anti-German sentiment following the outbreak of war, by late 1914 the community of Germanton in New South Wales, Australia, had decided to change its name. At the same time, news of Holbrook's endeavours had become headline news and the decision was taken to honour this submariner's bravery by taking his name.

It was a link that Holbrook never forgot. He subsequently visited the town on three occasions. Following his death in 1976, his widow, Mrs. Gundula Holbrook, donated his medals, including the Victoria Cross, to the Council of the Shire of Holbrook in 1982. Today they are on display in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. ●

BELOW: Despite the fact that the town of Holbrook is some 400 miles from the coast, it is also home to the Holbrook Submarine Museum. Established in Norman Holbrook VC's memory, two of the museum's main exhibits are the former Royal Australian Navy submarine HMAS *Otway* and a model of HMS *B11* which is seen here on display outside the museum. (COURTESY OF BIDGEE)

THE SHELLING OF WHITBY



BELOW: A postcard showing the damage caused to Abbey Lodge. (HMP)

THE EVENTS of 16 December 1914 had their origins in a desire by the German Fleet Command to draw the Royal Navy into the open. Originally it had been intended to entice the British out to battle on the open sea, but factions within the German Command favoured a much more aggressive challenge to the Royal Navy in the form of a direct assault on the British coast. Consequently, on 16 November 1914, the basic plan for the thrust was submitted to the Kaiser for his approval.

One of the many buildings in Whitby damaged during the shelling. This house was located in Spring Hill Terrace. (HMP)

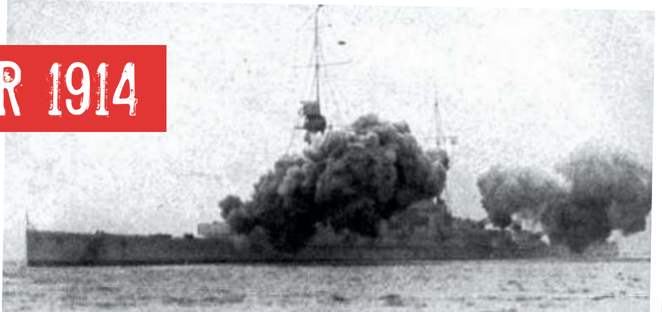
16 DECEMBER 1914

Under this plan it was proposed to send battleships to the vicinity of the English coast before dawn, where they would separate into groups of two and three and commence the bombardment of a number of targets. Mining of the coastal waters would also be undertaken. At this time the view was taken that the operation would commence on 22 November, assuming that the weather conditions were suitable.

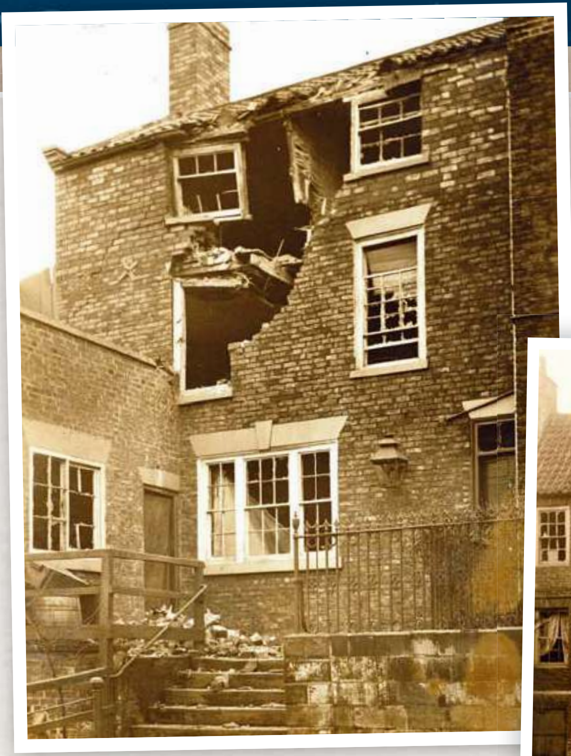
As preparations continued for the attack, the U-boat *U-27* was despatched on a reconnaissance mission. Her commander was under strict instructions not to attack unless the target was of exceptional "value". On its return on 26 November, *U-27*'s captain handed over carefully collected and valuable information. On the basis of this favourable intelligence, the date set for the bombardment was 29 November.

However, the German plans suddenly went awry on 23 November when a newspaper in London reported that the German's were intending to "bombard the coast" and that a "German landing was not out of consideration". The weather also continued to be unfavourable. The date for the attack slipped back.

The operation was finally postponed until finally, just before dawn on 15 December 1914, the First Reconnaissance Group, consisting of the battle cruisers SMS *Derfflinger*, SMS *Von Der Tann*, SMS *Moltke* and SMS *Seydlitz*, accompanied by the armoured cruiser SMS *Blücher*, slipped out of the Jade river in north-western Germany. They were commanded by Admiral Franz Ritter von Hipper on *Seydlitz*. This force was joined by the four light cruisers of the Second Reconnaissance Group with two flotillas of destroyers. After dark that evening, Hipper's force set off for the English coast. Moving far behind Hipper's squadrons were the three battle squadrons of the High Seas Fleet.

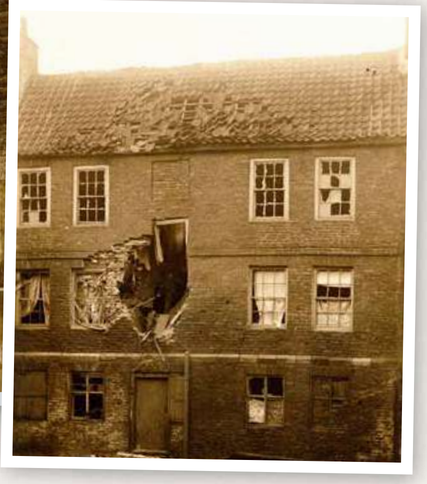


One of the German warships that attacked Whitby on 16 December 1914, the SMS *Derfflinger*, firing a full salvo. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



LEFT: West Hill House suffered substantial structural damage when it was hit by one of the 150 shells fired at Whitby. (HMP)

BELOW: This house in Spital Bridge, Whitby, also displays evidence of the Imperial German Navy's attack on the morning of 16 December 1914. (HMP)



Just before 08.00 hours the following morning the German ships were in position. The populations of the coastal towns of Scarborough, Hartlepool, West Hartlepool and Whitby were about to suddenly find themselves on the front line of the war.

Some of the men of the 7th (Cyclist) Battalion, Devonshire Regiment were in their trenches at the coastguard lookout point at Staithes to the north of Whitby by 05.45 hours that fateful December morning. Two hours earlier, *Seydlitz*, *Moltke* and *Blücher* were seen heading towards Scarborough, followed shortly afterwards by the sound of the German bombardment. Then, at 09.00 hours a coastguard on the East Cliff at Whitby spotted a ship he did not recognise. The signal "What ship is that?" was run up the flagpole. The answer was swift and unequivocal as the warship let loose a salvo of shells.

Seydlitz and *Moltke* were turning their attention to Whitby. The first two German shells struck the cliffs in front of the East Cliff coastguard station. The bombardment lasted for eleven minutes, the German shells striking the town as well as St Hilda's Abbey. Amidst all the damage, the flying shells, debris and shell fragments, ran hundreds of school children, sent home by their teachers, as well as their frantic parents who rushed through the streets looking for their offspring

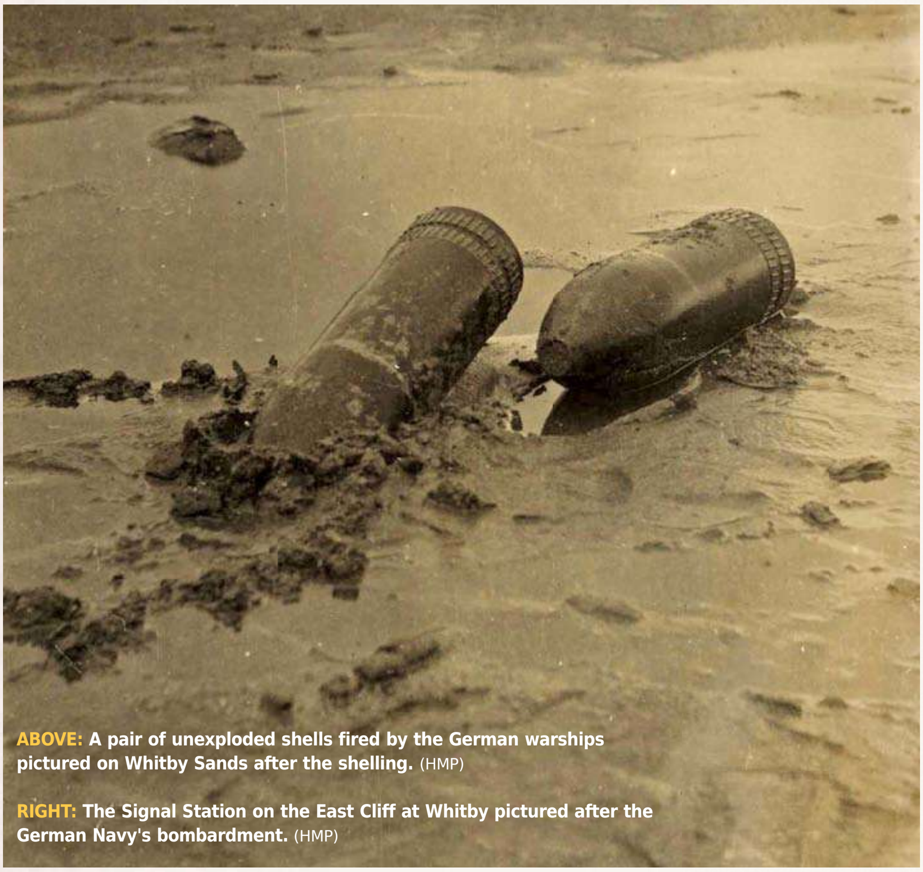
The German ships fired a total of 150 shells. Despite the damage to the town, only three people were killed directly from the shelling and possibly a fourth indirectly. A report in *The Times* of 18 December 1914, gave some information on two of those killed:

"The inquest was opened at Whitby today on the bodies of Frederick Randall, Coastguard boatman, aged 30, and William Edward Tunmore, North-Eastern Railway employee, aged 61, who were killed by shells during the bombardment of the Signal Station on the East Cliff.

"C.S. Davey, Chief Officer of Coastguard, in his evidence described the bombardment, stating that the whole fire was directed at the signal station, and common shells, not shrapnel, were fired. The first shot hit the cliff face, and this gave the Coastguards time to clear out of the signal station, which was demolished by the next shot. About 100 to 150 shells were fired. Randall emerged from the Coastguard quarters and a shell blew his head off. He left a wife and four children, the youngest being about six months old. The East Cliff was about 250 feet above sea level. The damaged property in the town was in the line of fire. The witness would not say whether the marksmanship was good or bad.

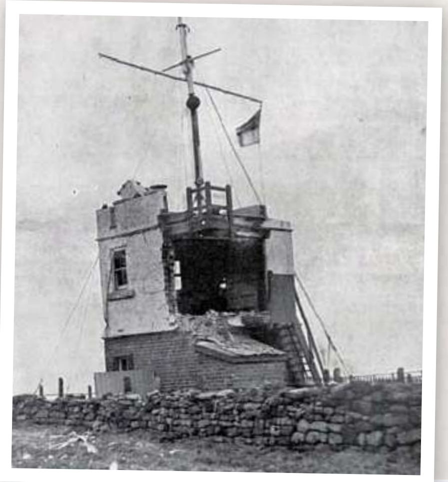
"Evidence with regard to Tunmore's death showed that he was leading his horse inland to get away from the fire zone when a shell exploded and a piece struck him in the chest."

Amongst the wounded was Boy Scout, Roy Miller. He was on duty at the coastguard station as a runner and was hit in the legs by shell splinters; his right leg in particular being badly damaged. Despite his wounds he remained at the station during the action. Doctors were unable to save his leg. He had the unusual distinction of being the first Boy Scout to be wounded in the war. Just down the road at Scarborough fellow scout 15-year-old George Taylor suffered a worse fate – he was the only English Boy Scout to die through enemy action in the First World War. ●



ABOVE: A pair of unexploded shells fired by the German warships pictured on Whitby Sands after the shelling. (HMP)

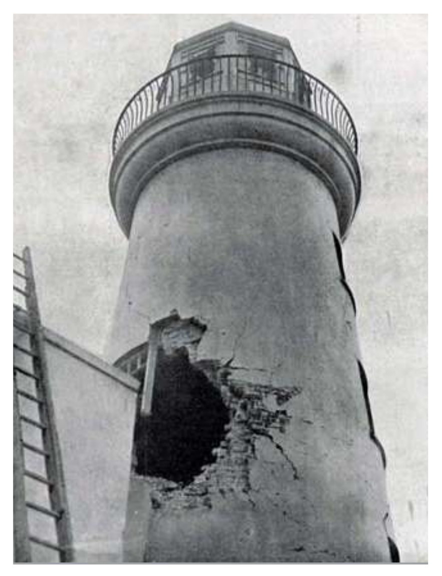
RIGHT: The Signal Station on the East Cliff at Whitby pictured after the German Navy's bombardment. (HMP)



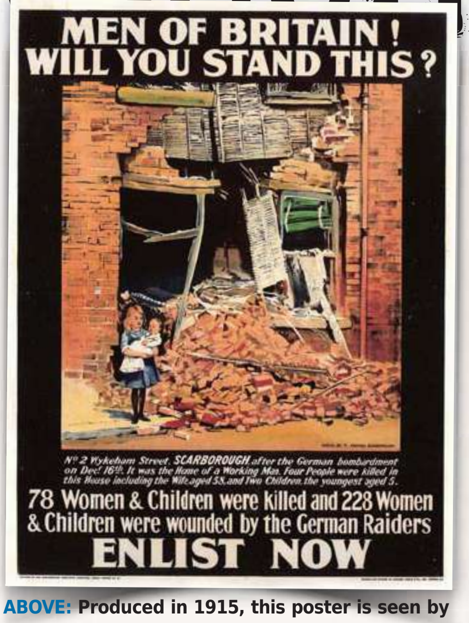
THE BOMBARDMENT OF SCARBOROUGH

16 DECEMBER 1914

WITH WHITBY yet to be hit, at around 08.00 hours on the morning of 16 December 1914, three workmen, repairing a cliff-top cottage to the north of Scarborough, caught sight of three naval vessels steaming close inshore. Unaware of the intention of these ships, they continued with their work. They were not, however, the only ones to notice the activity out to sea. At his post in the coastguard station on Castle Hill, an alert lookout reported, by telephone to the wireless station behind Scarborough, that "some strange ships are approaching from the north. I cannot make out what they are. They do not answer my signals."



ABOVE: **Damage to the lighthouse – the final building hit in the attack – which was located on the end of Vincent's Pier, Scarborough. The offending shell passed through both sides of the lighthouse tower, and so severe was the damage that within three days work had started on its demolition.** (HMP)

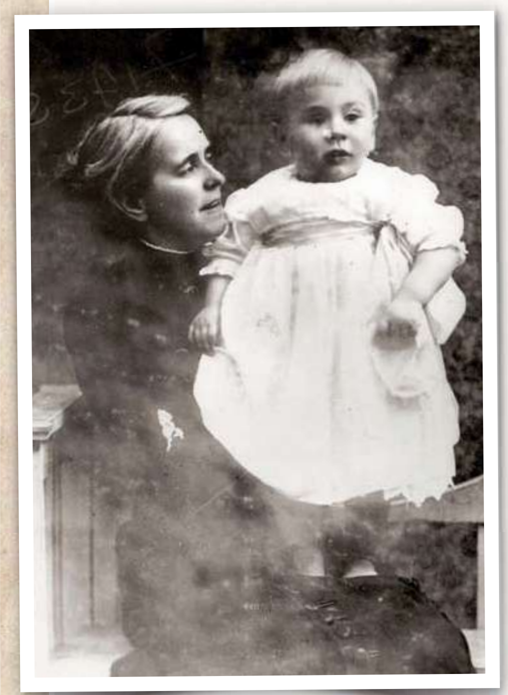

MEN OF BRITAIN ! WILL YOU STAND THIS ?
Nº 2 Wykeham Street, SCARBOROUGH after the German bombardment on Decr 16th. It was the Home of a Working Man. Four People were killed in this House including the Wife aged 58 and Two Children the youngest aged 5.
78 Women & Children were killed and 228 Women & Children were wounded by the German Raiders
ENLIST NOW

ABOVE: **Produced in 1915, this poster is seen by some as one of the defining, and quite possibly most successful, of such images from the First World War. This damage, embellished by the emotive addition of a little girl and her doll, was at No.2 Wykeham Street. This house was the scene of the worst casualties from the shelling. A total of four persons were killed here – Mrs. Johanna Bennett, her son, Albert, and two other children.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

The three vessels were in fact the German battlecruisers *Derfflinger* and *Von der Tann*, and the triple-funnelled light cruiser *Kolberg*. Possibly aware that they were being watched, the captain of *Von der Tann*, making a last glance through his field-glasses, gave the order to open fire. The crew of *Derfflinger* immediately followed suit, whilst *Kolberg* detached itself from the small fleet, steaming on ahead to commence laying mines.

Back on Castle Hill the lookout saw, rather than heard, the first signs of the thunderous broadside. His next message had, understandably, a more urgent tone: "They are Germans – they are firing on us." Within a matter of seconds the 11-inch and 5.9-inch shells from this initial barrage fell upon Scarborough. The damp, cold, morning air in the streets of the slumbering town was rent asunder by exploding shells, falling masonry, and whistling shrapnel. No more would be heard from the lookout – a shell had put the telephone line out of action.

It was actually around 08.10 hours that *Von der Tann* and the *Derfflinger* opened fire on

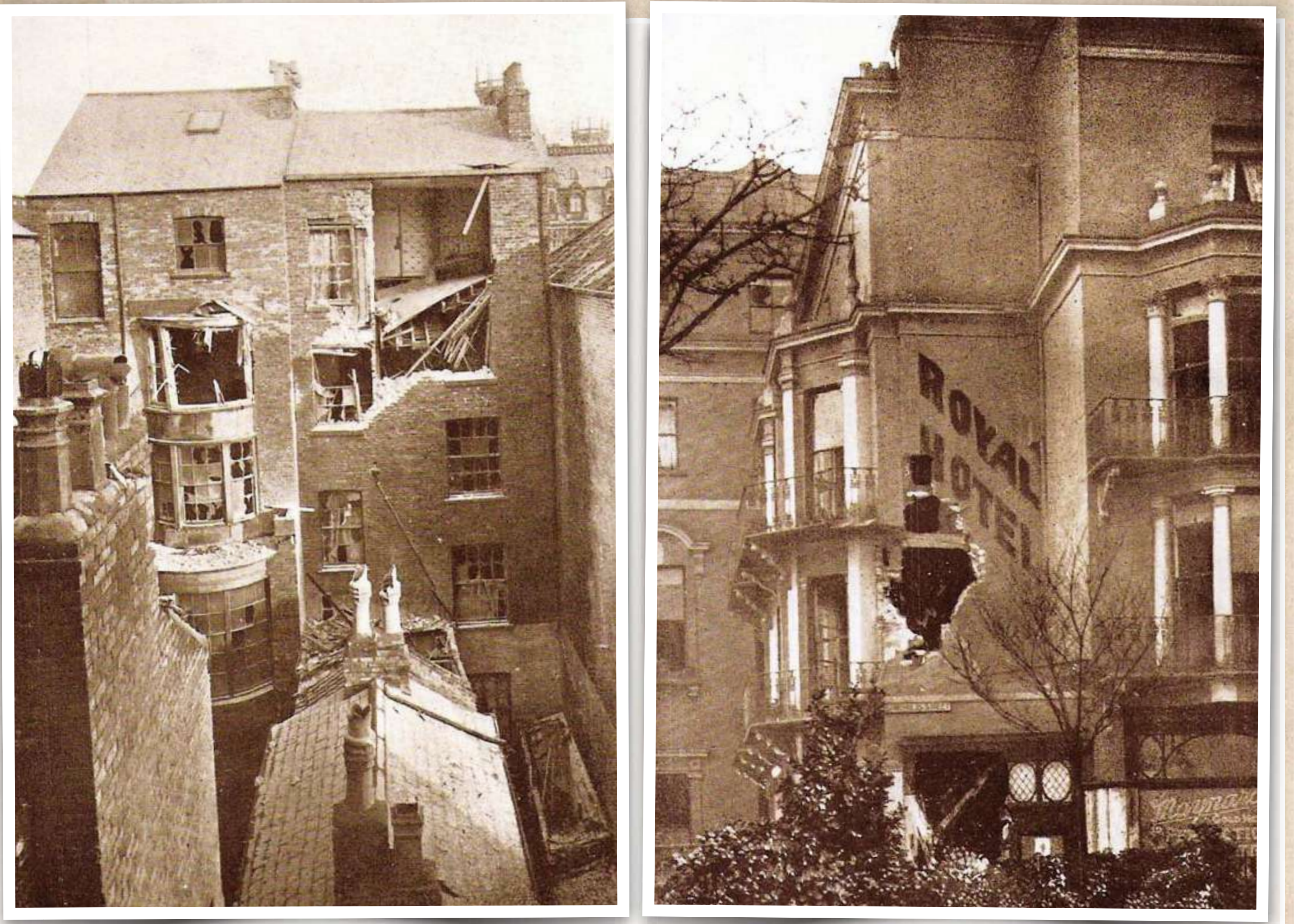


ABOVE: **An image that portrays how warfare, more than ever before, would no longer make any distinction between civilian and combatant. Here the youngest victim of the bombardment of Scarborough, one John Shields Ryalls, aged just 14 months, is pictured in the arms of Miss Bertha MacEntyre. Both were killed, at the same time, at 22 Westbourne Road, when a shell smashed through the rear part of the roof.** (IWM; Q53464)

A MESSAGE FROM CHURCHILL

ONE OF those who wrote to the Mayor of Scarborough, was the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. Churchill had been at the Admiralty when the news of the attack broke. Not exactly at his post, Churchill was in his bath when, at about 08.30 hours, an officer from the War Office burst in to tell him that German warships were shelling the East Coast.

Four days after the attack, Churchill penned his lengthy letter to the Mayor of Scarborough. In this he wrote that "practically the whole fast cruiser force of the German Navy, including some great ships vital to their fleet and utterly irreplaceable, have been risked for the passing pleasure of killing as many English people as possible, irrespective of sex, age or condition, in the limited time available ....Whatever feats of arms the German Navy may hereafter perform, the stigma of the baby-killers of Scarborough will brand its officers and men while sailors sail the seas."



ABOVE LEFT and RIGHT: **Mirroring the scenes that were witnessed at Hartlepool and Whitby, these buildings in Scarborough were pictured after the raid on 16 December 1914. The Royal Hotel at Scarborough after a German shell had punched this hole in one of its walls.** (HMP)

Scarborough. The first shells of the fusillade had been targeted at the signal station located prominently on the high point of Castle Hill. As a direct result Scarborough Castle, its days of shot and shell thought to have been long past, once again found itself on the front line! The keep was hit twice, and some damage inflicted upon the twelve-foot thick castle walls. By virtue of its location against the Castle walls, the barracks, thankfully unoccupied at the time, were also badly mauled. And so the shells continued to fall on the town. The Grand Hotel was another early victim, as well as the private residence of a local MP. Then the Spa itself was struck, shells and shrapnel fragments gouging large chunks from the surrounding sea wall.

The first fatality followed soon after. A chemist shop at 2 South Street was demolished when a single shell struck the roadway outside. The blast dug a large crater, and the blast and shell fragments it unleashed killed the shop's porter, 49-year-old Leonard Ellis, as he opened the door to the shop. Ellis therefore gained the unwelcome distinction of being the first civilian to die, on the British mainland, as a result of enemy action in the First World War.

Twenty minutes or so after they had unleased their bombardment, the German ships stopped firing and steamed off to the north. Behind them lay a battered Scarborough, with some eighteen civilians lying dead or dying. Of this total, eight were women and four were children. A further eighty or more were reported to be injured.

As well as the human cost of the shelling, the fabric of the town itself had taken a heavy beating. One list suggests that no less than 632 buildings – residential, commercial and public – were damaged to one degree or another. The list of damaged property included hotels, boarding houses, churches, chapels, private homes, schools, warehouses, workshops, and even mansions.

The effect of the attack upon some of the residents of Scarborough was dramatic. A newspaper reporter later wrote of his observation: "The first thoughts of the inhabitants were that a violent thunderstorm had, without warning, burst over the town; but the real character of the visitation was quickly realised as debris began to fly about and shells burst with destructive effect in all parts of the town. Daylight had just broken and many towns' people were at breakfast, whilst many others were still in bed."

The German press made much of the attack upon Scarborough, claiming that the British coast was no longer safe from their ships. The *Nurnberger Zeitung*, for example, expanded on the same theme the day after the attack: "For centuries their coast was secured. For decades they could rob and get rich in all corners of the world without being punished. The much smaller German fleet put the glories of England in the shade". Yet it would seem that the biggest benefactor of the raid was the British Army.

The public outcry, in no small part fanned by the British press and government, could be felt throughout not only the United Kingdom, but also the British Empire and its allied countries. By all accounts, local recruiting offices across the country were besieged by would-be applicants.

Perhaps *The Daily Mirror*, in passing its judgement on the German bombardment of the East Coast, summed up the situation perfectly. With barely disguised derision of the German actions, it declared, "Many thanks von Tirpitz: you bagged some eighty-odd civilians, a church and two ruins – we get two new army Corps". ●

SCARBOROUGH
1914

LEFT: **A relic of the German bombardment of Scarborough in December 1914.** (HMP)

THE BRITISH GUNS RETURN FIRE

16 DECEMBER 1914

THE ADMIRALTY knew that the Germans were planning a raid upon the UK's East Coast around the middle of December 1914. Codebooks retrieved from the German light cruiser *Magdeburg* which had run aground in the Baltic (see page 48) had been handed over by the Russians and these helped Naval Intelligence gain some inkling of what the enemy had in mind. As a consequence, on the evening of 14 December, Churchill was warned that a battlecruiser attack upon the east coast was imminent.

As a result, at Hartlepool the men of the 18th Battalion Durham Light Infantry were already at their posts. Some 150 in number, these troops were woken at 04.30 hours that day. Each man was issued with 250 rounds of ammunition and marched off to his respective post. One detachment was sent to the Spion Kop to occupy the trenches that had been dug there, whilst the remainder took up posts throughout the area.

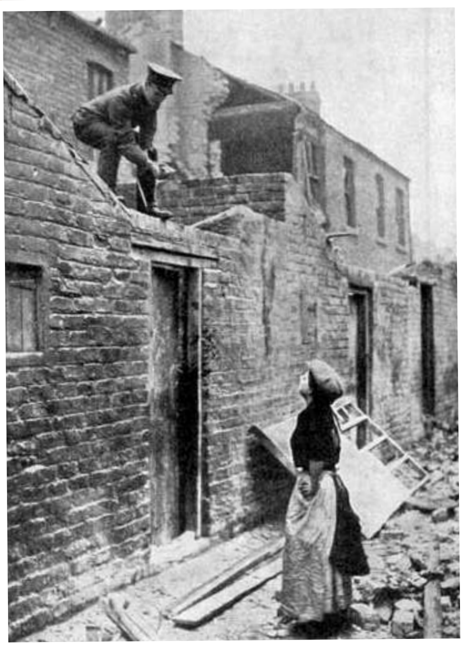
Shortly before midnight on the 15th, the Fortress Commander at the town's Heugh (pronounced "Yuff") Battery, situated on the headland in Hartlepool, had received a telegram: "A special sharp look-out to be kept all along east coast at dawn tomorrow, December 16th. Keep fact of special warning as secret as possible; only responsible officers making arrangements to know." The Fortress Commander told his men to take post from 07.00 hours to 08.30 hours.

By 06.30 hours on the 16th, the men of the Royal Garrison Artillery were ready at their three 6-inch guns. Two of these guns were situated in Heugh Battery with the third a hundred yards away in the Lighthouse Battery.

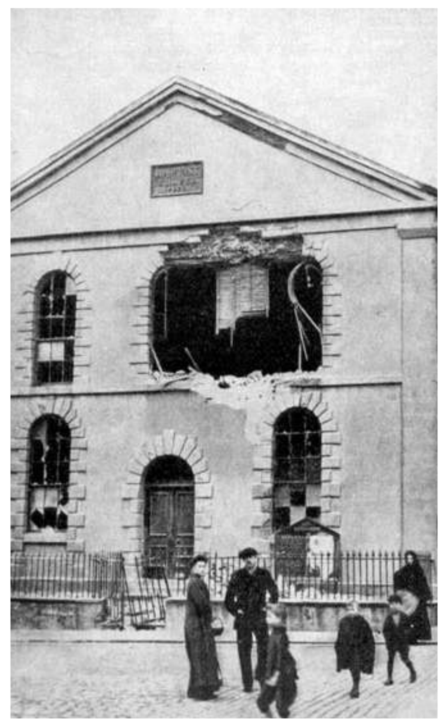
Dawn broke through an overcast sky and a now calmer sea. A light mist meant that visibility from Heugh Battery was only about 6,000 yards. All seemed quiet until, at about 08.00 hours, a message was received from the South Gare Battery three and-a-half miles away at the mouth of the Tees. It stated that dreadnoughts had been seen steaming north. This was followed almost immediately by a message from the Port War Signal Station in the Lighthouse stating that three warships were approaching at great speed.

The German warships opened fire at a range of only 4,000 yards. Between them the ships had twenty 11.2-inch guns, eight 8.2-inch, eighteen 5.9-inch and an array of smaller calibre weapons. It was an unequal duel with the defenders' three 6-inch guns.

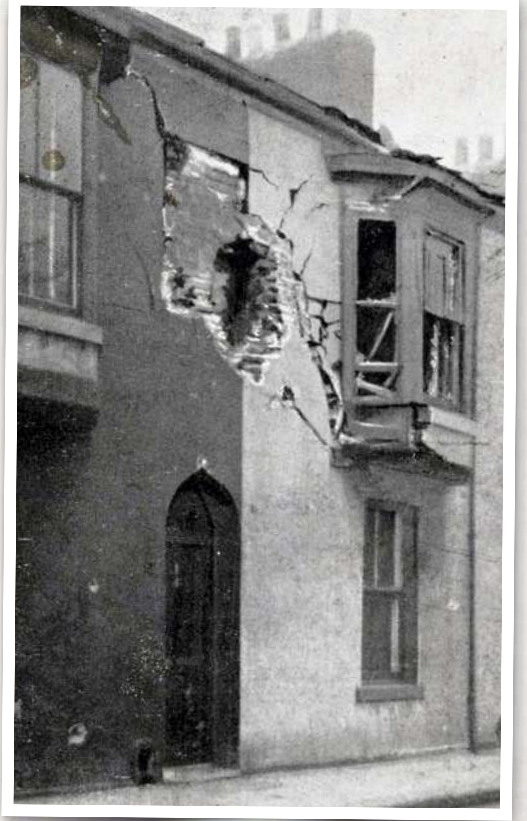
The first shell from the leading German



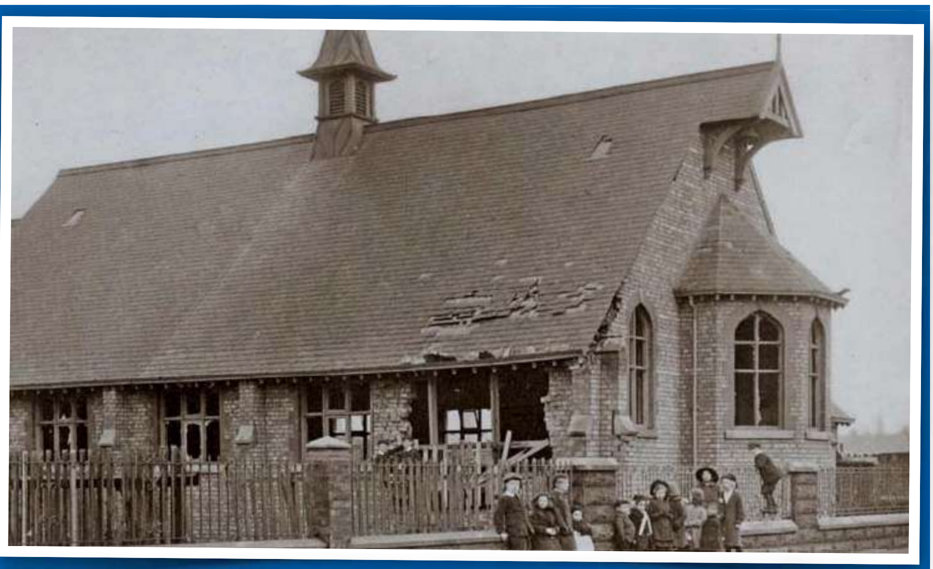
ABOVE: **A soldier helps clear up in the aftermath of the shelling. It is possible that this serviceman is from the 3rd Battalion Green Howards, elements of which were drafted in to Hartlepool to offer what assistance they could.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **A typical street scene in the aftermath of the bombardment. This is the damage caused to the Baptist Chapel which was located at the end of Baptist Street and Regent Street in Hartlepool. During the course of the attack, some 600 houses were destroyed or damaged.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **A view of the damage caused to a pair of terraced buildings in Victoria Place which is on the headland in Hartlepool, some several hundred feet inland from Heugh Battery.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **St Barnabas in Hart Road, Hartlepool, after having been hit by one of the 1,000 or so shells fired at the town by the German warships during the bombardment.** (HMP)

warship (no-one is certain which ship this was) fell beside the low wall which formed the boundary between the Heugh Battery and the pathway leading to the promenade just twenty-five yards from the guns. The blast killed Private Theophilis Jones and three other members of the 18th Battalion Durham Light Infantry. Jones was declared to have been the first soldier killed by enemy action on British soil in the Great War and the first since the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

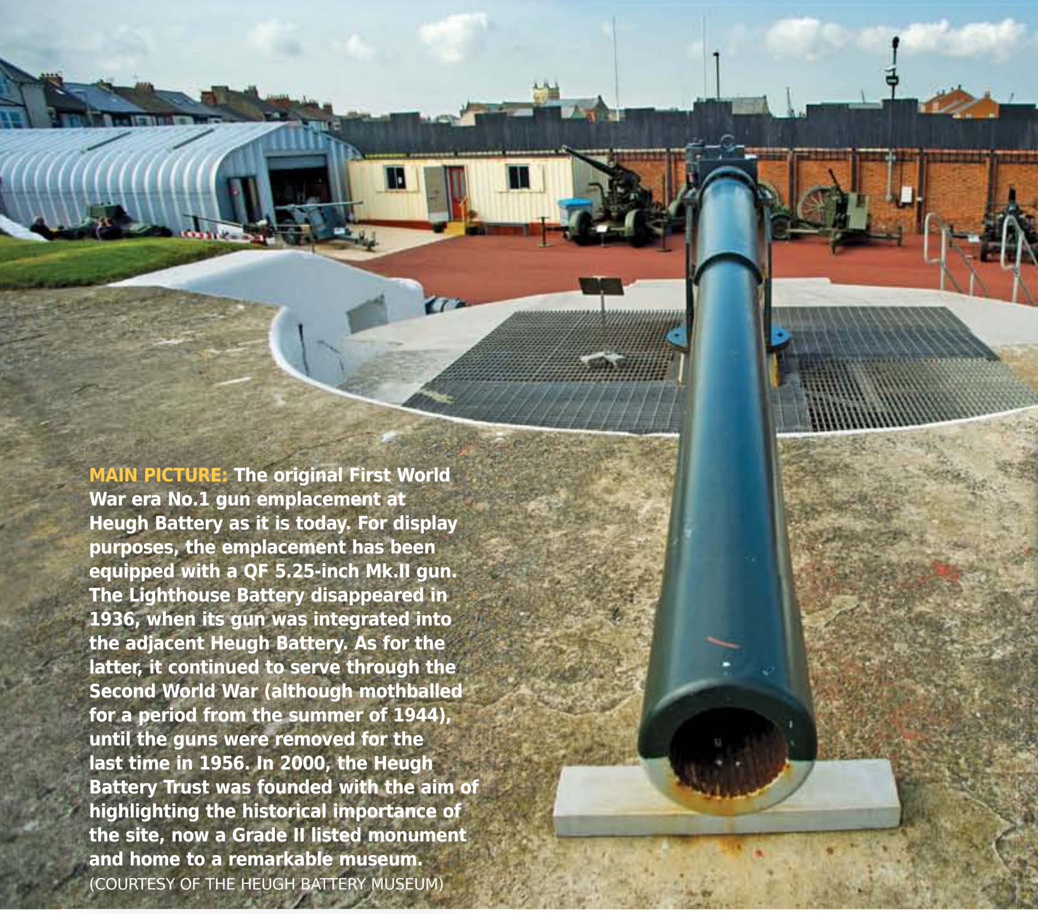
Wounded men lay among the dead crying in agony. Two medical orderlies, Gunner William Houston and Gunner Robert Spence, dashed out from the cover afforded by the battery to help. A second shell exploded almost in the same area as the first; both Houston and Spence were killed, many more wounded. Two of the latter, Private Walter Rogers and Private Thomas Minks subsequently died of their injuries (Minks the following day).

Colonel William Albert Robertson was the Battery Medical Officer, being a doctor in civilian life. He was at his home in Hartlepool eating breakfast when he first heard the sound of the bombardment and immediately set off for the battery on his bicycle. The journey was not an easy one as people were already spilling out into the streets, some fleeing away from the coast, others running towards the sea to gaze at the spectacle.

"The guns were going by that time," Robertson later recalled, "and the first thing that cheered me was the sight of the old battery dog barking away beside the guns! So then I knew that everything was alright." This was the only coastal battery in England to fire its guns in anger during the First World War.

Seydlitz and *Moltke* then left *Blücher* to continue engaging the battery whilst they moved into position to bombard the town. "The work of destruction now began upon the two boroughs," recalled one witness. "A group of enormous gasholders were the first to go, 'picked off as clean as a whistle'. Each became a roaring column of flame. No area seemed to have been untouched. It was as if a gigantic rake had been drawn across each spot, a gigantic 'search and sweep'. Shipyards, marine engineering works, railway stations, churches, schools and streets, even the private houses of heads of businesses on the low ridge above West Hartlepool, received shells of various calibre."

When the battle cruisers disengaged they had caused the deaths of 112 (also given as 119) men and women with a further 200 wounded. Of those that were killed only twenty-three died in their homes, the rest were struck down in the streets. The whole action lasted for forty-three minutes, with the German guns falling silent at 08.48 hours. ●



MAIN PICTURE: **The original First World War era No.1 gun emplacement at Heugh Battery as it is today. For display purposes, the emplacement has been equipped with a QF 5.25-inch Mk.II gun. The Lighthouse Battery disappeared in 1936, when its gun was integrated into the adjacent Heugh Battery. As for the latter, it continued to serve through the Second World War (although mothballed for a period from the summer of 1944), until the guns were removed for the last time in 1956. In 2000, the Heugh Battery Trust was founded with the aim of highlighting the historical importance of the site, now a Grade II listed monument and home to a remarkable museum.** (COURTESY OF THE HEUGH BATTERY MUSEUM)

ABOVE: **The plaque commemorating the events of 16 December 1914, and more specifically the spot where the first shell fell and first men were killed and injured, which can be found on the coastal walkway a short distance from Heugh Battery – note the battery command post that can be seen in the background.** (COURTESY OF ANDREW CURTIS, **WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK**)

19 DECEMBER 1914

IN THE TRENCHES

THE ONSET of winter on the Western Front in 1914 resulted in a period of truly appalling weather. At the same time, the early trench systems constructed by the British following the stalemate that had developed were very different from the much more sophisticated systems that would later be created.

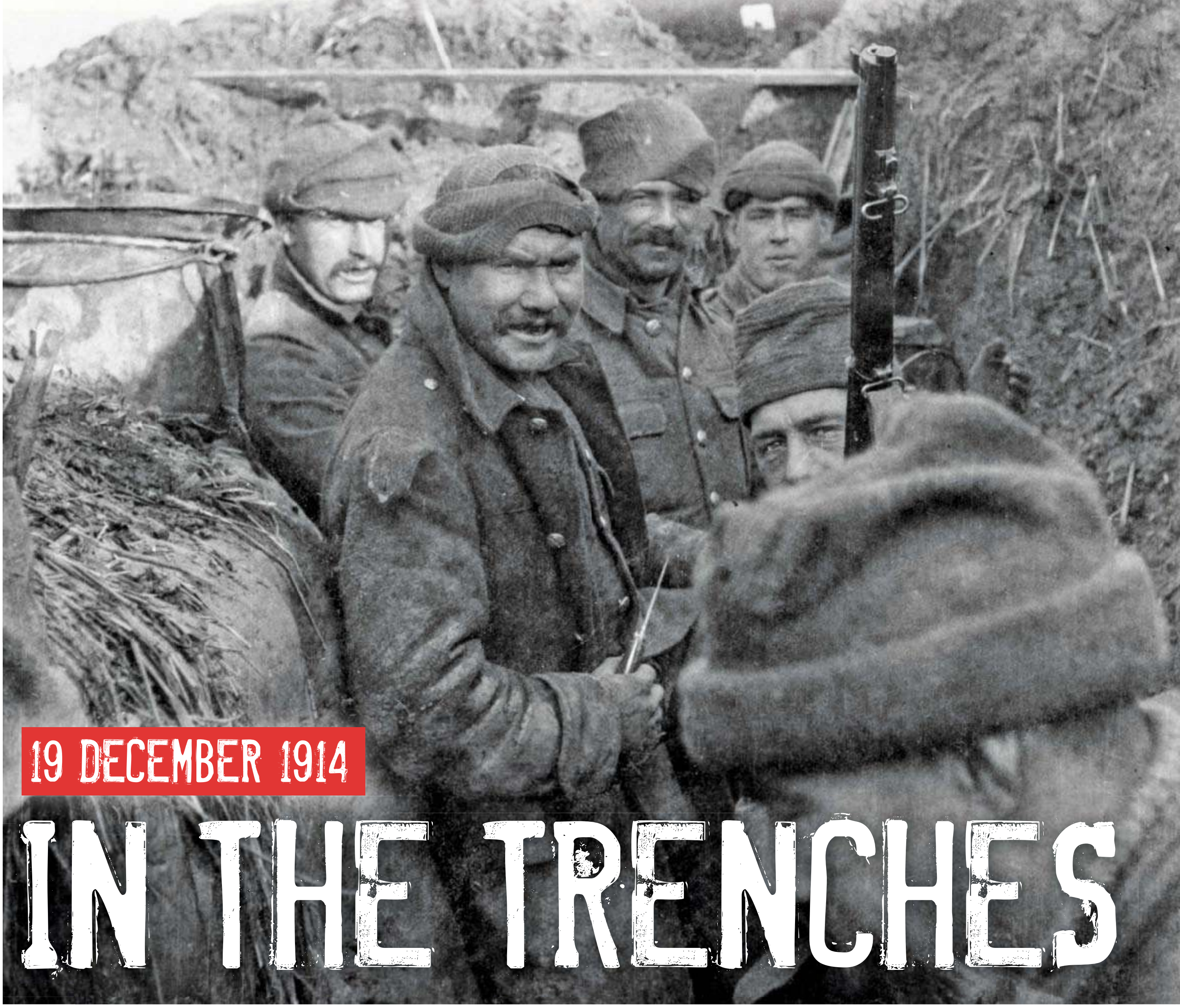
At this time much of the front line did not consist of a system of continuous trenches, but of a series of unconnected trenches and small island posts, often located in a sea of mud. For the soldier at the front, the first winter of the war was going to be an unpleasant one.

In December 1914, the men of the 1st Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment found themselves in the front line near Kemmel, to the south-west of Ypres, having relieved the 1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers in the front line. The regimental history provides the following insight: "They found the trenches in places waist-deep in mud and water. B, C and D Companies were put in the firing line, A in support in a farm close to Battalion Headquarters. The problem was how to deal with the water. Several bundles of fascines and some planks of wood were obtained and placed on the floors of the trenches to stand on. Whisps of straw were distributed to the men, who wrapped them round their legs and boots, but still it was impossible to keep dry. After twenty-four hours under these conditions B Company was in such a bad state that the Commanding Officer ordered A Company to relieve them. On the 7th, after twenty-four hours of rain, the trenches were like miniature canals."

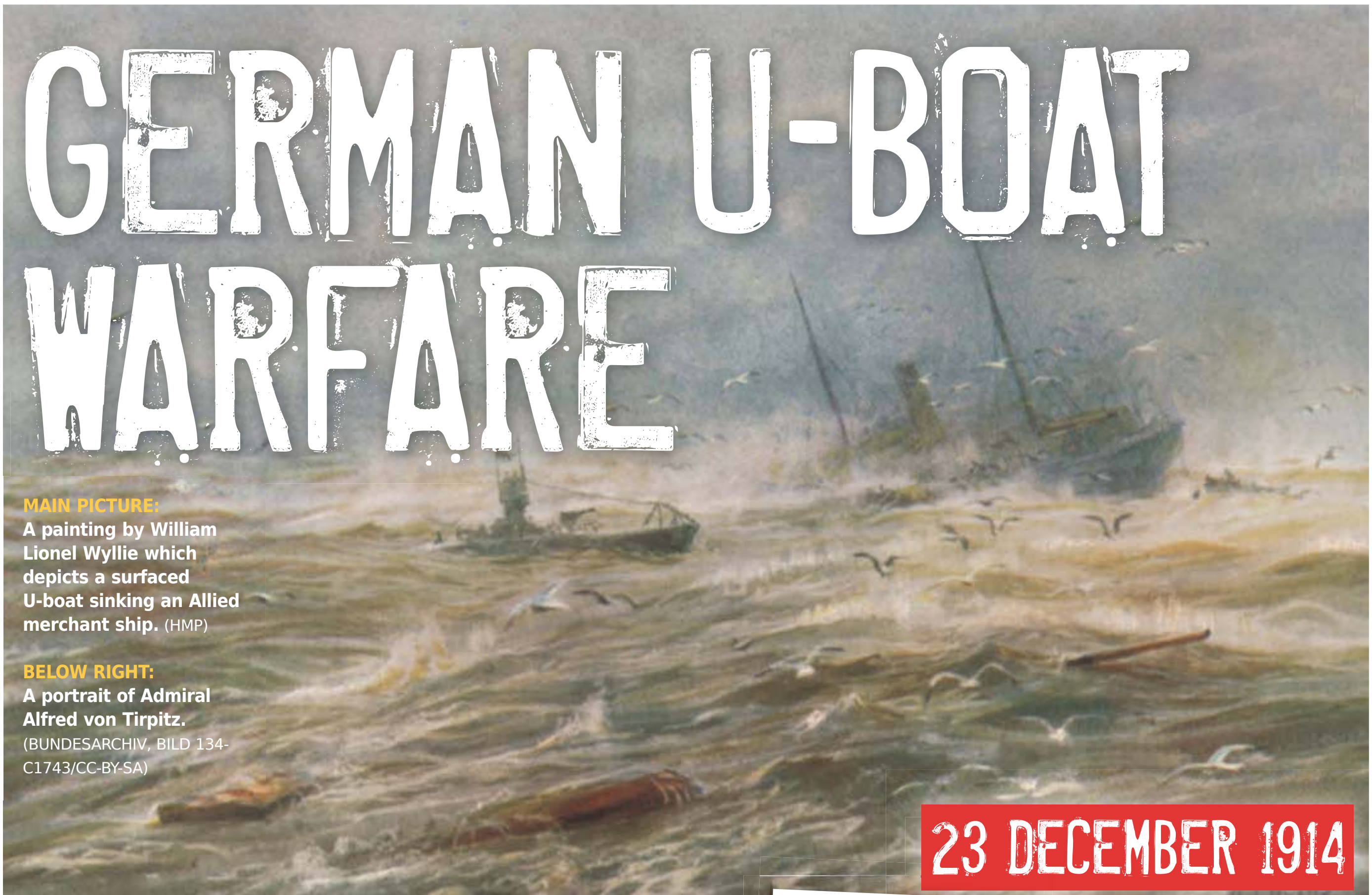
The 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers also moved into the front line in early December 1914. Initially, it rained heavily. The parapets of the trenches fell in and some trenches began to fill with water down which a rapid current of flowing water developed. Ordinary shoring up failed and it was only with help from the Royal Engineers that a dry trench with a floor above the flood water was constructed. This was achieved by the sappers working in two feet of mud and water for two weeks to construct box revetments using timber.

Near Armentières, the men of the 1st Battalion, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) were located in front line trenches at Houplines – where the picture below was taken on 19 December 1914. Part of the 19th Brigade, they had joined the 6th Division on 10 October 1914. In December, active fighting had died away on this front, but its place was taken by constant shelling and the deadly sniping which claimed numerous victims.

As a result of the appalling weather, all the trenches occupied by the Cameronians were knee-deep in mud and water, as the history of the 6th Division describes: "The weather during November and December was truly appalling. All trenches were knee-deep and more in mud and water, and it is on record that the B.G.C., 19th Infantry Brigade, had his boots sucked off by the mud and went round trenches without them. Parapets would not stand and were so flimsy that many men were shot through them." (IWM; Q51550) ●



GERMAN U-BOAT WARFARE



MAIN PICTURE: A painting by William Lionel Wyllie which depicts a surfaced U-boat sinking an Allied merchant ship. (HMP)

BELOW RIGHT: A portrait of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz. (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 134-C1743/CC-BY-SA)

23 DECEMBER 1914

IN A statement made by Grand Admiral Alfred Peter von Tirpitz, Secretary of State of the German Imperial Navy Office on 23 December 1914, it was announced that submarines would be used against British merchant ships in a bid to blockade British ports. In the statement released through a semi-official newspaper, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, von Tirpitz said that submarines would be more effective than airships at sinking ships.

The paper also reported that the German Admiral's statement was "highly important" and that "the German public knew well that Germany would have a reply ready to the question how the Germans ought to attack England's nerve centre".

The paper also said that because von Tirpitz stated his views so frankly it indicated that he was thoroughly sure of his ground. *Frankfurter Zeitung* argues that increased British naval activity off the coast of Belgium is due to a growing fear of German submarine action but, the paper continued, "We occupy Ostend, and mean to hold it as a base, and when our Admiralty considers the moment has arrived, we will carry on the blockade war with determination and ruthlessness". The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* newspaper also declared that the Admiral's statement "indicates the means by which the British policy of starving Germany out was to be countered".

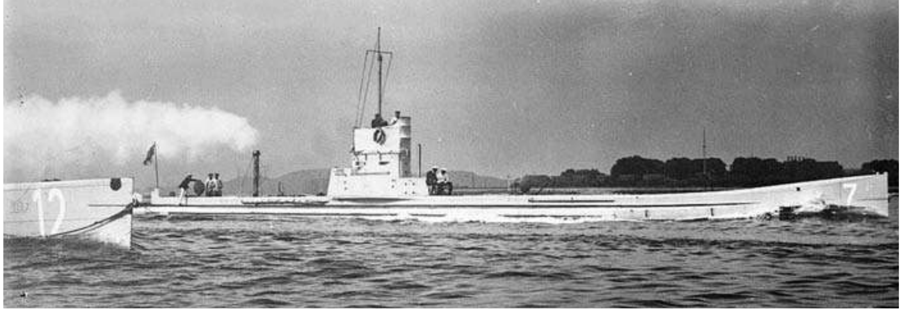
Inevitably the British press gave its response to the announcement. The *Daily Express* wrote that: "What is intended is raids on the English coast by German submarines searching for British merchant vessels. From now on German submarines are going to renew their activity, and hope to be able to crawl as far as the Straits of Dover, and pass northwards to the coasts of Ireland. There they think they will torpedo and sink many vessels bringing supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials into Great Britain."

A number of papers drew parallels with the comments of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, the previous August in an article entitled "Danger" published in *Collier's Weekly*, had been the first person to suggest that, in the event of war, Britain "might be starved into submission by the obstruction of her mercantile fleet and by the destruction and withholding of food supplies from this country".

The New York *Tribune* commented on von Tirpitz's announcement with the following observation: "There is only one trouble about Admiral von Tirpitz's proposed marvellous achievement, and that is its impossibility as long as the present naval conditions prevail."

Time would prove the accuracy of American newspaper's assessment of the situation. Such was the strength of the Royal Navy there were few German surface vessels in the waters off the United Kingdom. The U-boats would have to fight alone and the odds were always against them. ●

One of the U-boats in service at the start of the First World War, *U-7*, pictured running on the surface. Commissioned on 18 July 1911, *U-7* was sunk in a "friendly fire" incident on 21 January 1915, when it was mistaken for a Royal Navy submarine and torpedoed by *U-22*. Twenty-four crew men were killed; there was only one survivor. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



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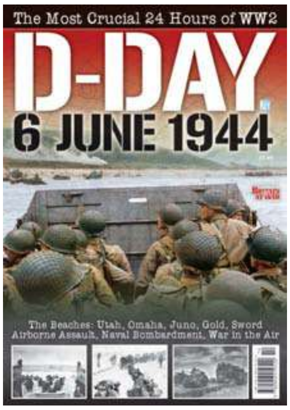
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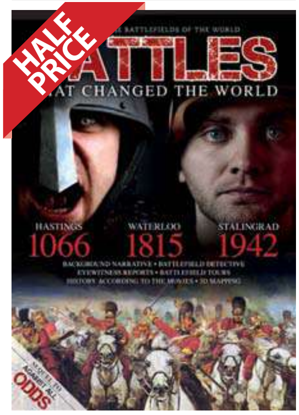
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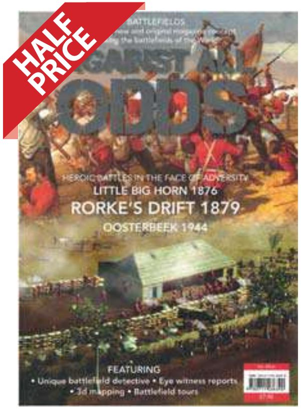
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354/14

FIRST AERIAL BOMB DROPPED ON BRITISH SOIL

24 DECEMBER 1914

APPROACHING FROM the direction of Deal at 5,000 feet and gripping the control stick of his Friedrichshafen FF.29 floatplane between his knees, *Oberleutnant-zur-See* Stephan Prondzynski heaved a single 22lb pound bomb over the side of the cockpit and leant out to observe its fall towards the intended target: Dover Castle.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, von Prondzynski's aim was poor, and the bomb fell in the garden of Thomas Terson near the rear of St. James's Rectory – some 400 yards from the Castle – an area located between Harold Street and Leyburn Road. The subsequent explosion, leaving a crater ten feet wide and four feet deep, shattered some of the windows in the Rectory and houses nearby.

This had not, however, been the first German's attempt on bombing the Castle. Three days earlier, on 21 December 1914, a sister FF29 floatplane from the same unit, the Imperial German Navy's *See Flieger Abteilung 1* (Naval Flying Detachment No.1), had attacked Dover. The aircraft dropped two bombs, both of which fell harmlessly into the sea.

Three days later, at exactly 10.45 hours on 24 December 1914, von Prondzynski returned for another attempt. He would earn himself a place in history as the first pilot to ever carry out a successful aerial bombing of the United Kingdom. Mr James Banks, a gardener at the Rectory, busy pruning a tree at the time of the explosion and who was blown from its branches suffering bruising (he had been cutting holly for Christmas decorations for the church), would also earn his moment of fame – as the first ever person injured (albeit of a very minor nature) in an air raid on British soil. The damage amounted to £40.

As soon as he had released his cargo, von Prondzynski turned for home. Fog made his escape back across the Channel that little bit easier. British aircraft sent up in an attempt to catch the raider stood little chance.

A statement issued on the same day by the Official Press Bureau added little information: "An aeroplane of the enemy dropped a bomb while passing over Dover this morning. The missile fell in a garden and exploded, but no damage was done. The aeroplane was seen for a few seconds only. It left immediately, passing out over the sea. A British aircraft went up, but did not see the enemy again. The weather was cloudy and foggy".

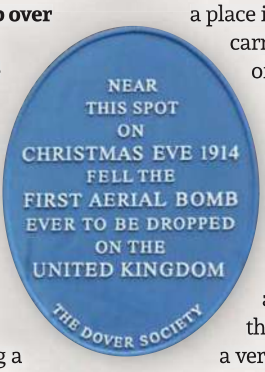
In bombing Dover, *See Flieger Abteilung 1* had introduced a new element to modern warfare. ●

THE FIRST INTERCEPTION, 25 DECEMBER 1914

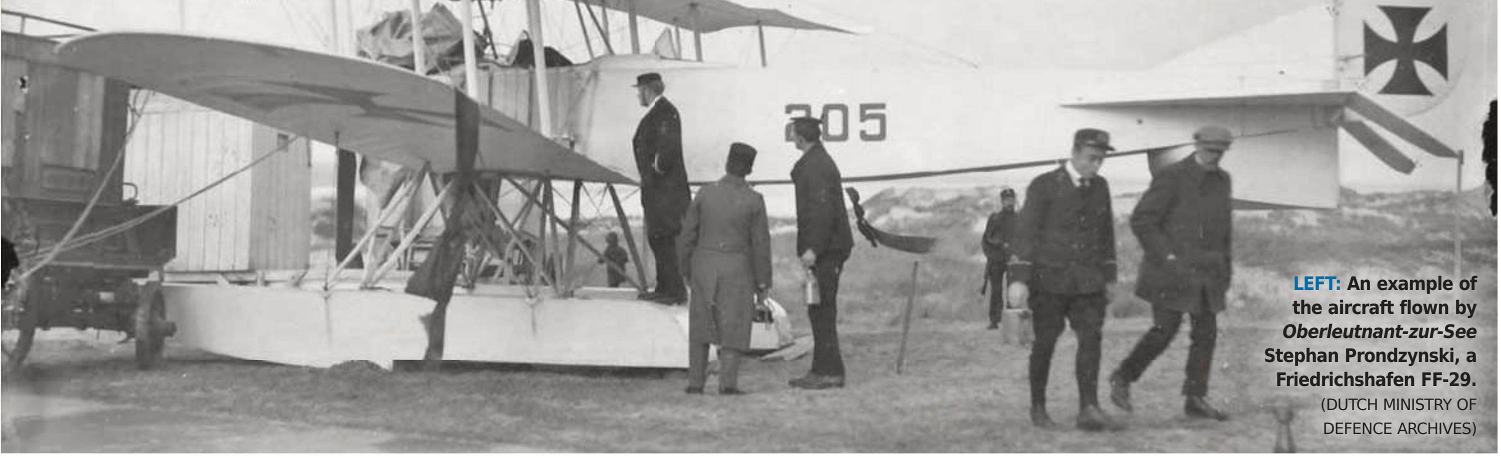
NO DOUBT eager to build on this first ever successful air raid, *See Flieger Abteilung 1* returned the next day. This time the target was London's docklands. Yet again, another "first" would follow – the first ever successful interception of an enemy aircraft over the United Kingdom.

During its approach to London, the FF29 floatplane involved was intercepted over Erith by a Vickers Gunbus of the Royal Flying Corps. The Gunbus, or more properly a Vickers Fighting Biplane 5 (the first aircraft specifically designed as a fighter for the Royal Flying Corps), had taken off from Joyce Green near Dartford. Having located the intruder, the Gunbus took up the pursuit.

As it fled, the FF29 dropped two bombs, both of which fell in a field near Cliffe Railway Station. Unfortunately, the RFC crew was forced to abandon the attack when their single forward-firing machine-gun (usually of the Vickers or Lewis types) jammed. Though damaged, the FF29 was able to return to its base.



ABOVE: **The blue plaque which marks the first ever aerial bombing of the UK.**
(COURTESY OF PAUL WELLS)



LEFT: **An example of the aircraft flown by *Oberleutnant-zur-See* Stephan Prondzynski, a Friedrichshafen FF-29.**
(DUTCH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE ARCHIVES)

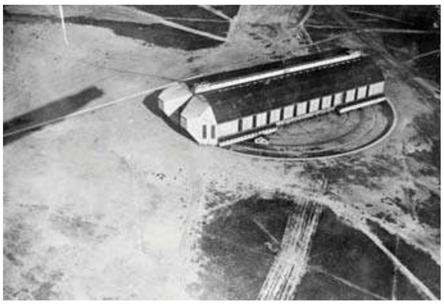
THE "CHRISTMAS RAID"

AS THE soldiers of France, Belgium and Britain dug in across northern France and Flanders to hold back the might of the Kaiser's armies, the people in Britain waited for the German airships to bombard the cities and towns of the UK. Often as big as a large warship and capable of carrying a significant bomb-load over long distances, the German rigid airships, such as the Zeppelins, cast a shadow of fear across Britain.

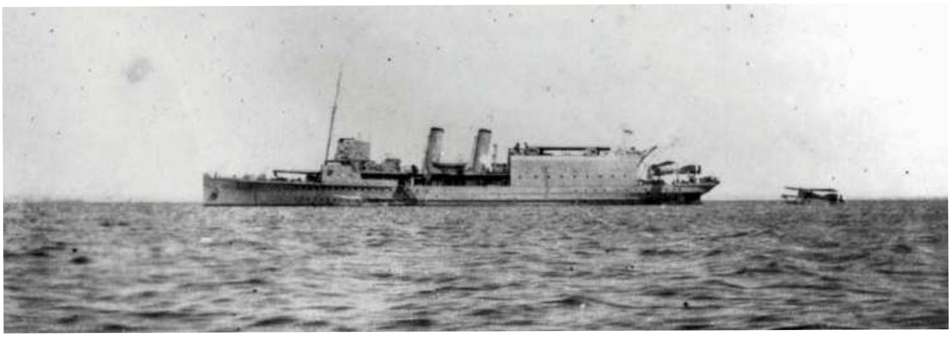
Albeit that the feared bombing raids upon the UK had yet to materialise, during the early months of the First World War the German airships were being used effectively for reconnaissance over the North Sea. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, was not the kind of man to sit and watch the Germans take control of the air over the sea, or to wait for the airships to start attacking Britain. "Only offensive action could help us," he wrote. "I decided immediately to strike, by bombing from aeroplanes, at the Zeppelin sheds wherever these gigantic structures could be found in Germany."

The main problem which faced the RNAS in implementing Churchill's objective of attacking the Zeppelins on the ground was that Britain possessed no aircraft which had sufficient range to reach the airship bases in northern and central Germany from either the UK or from Allied-held territory on the Continent. This meant that the aircraft would have to be transported by sea to within striking distance of the airship sheds.

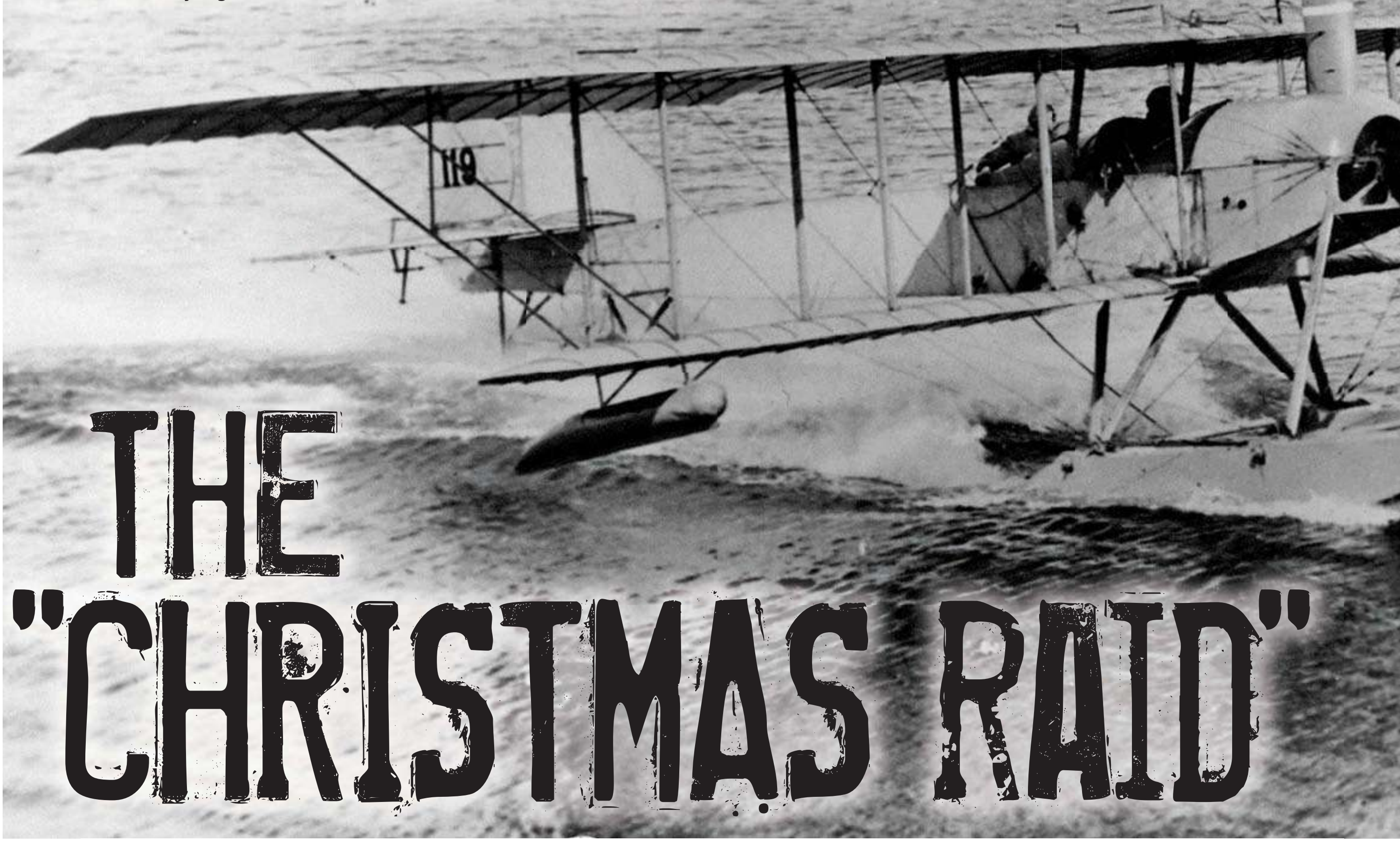
The Royal Navy had already requisitioned two cross-Channel passenger packets, *Engadine* and *Riviera*, and work on their conversion to carriers had begun at Chatham dockyard. Another packet, *Empress*, had also been commissioned at Chatham as an air service transport and



ABOVE: The target of the Cuxhaven raid, the twin revolving airship shed at Nordholz near Cuxhaven, as it looked later in the war. Its 1914 appearance has been somewhat altered by the addition of protuberances to accommodate the larger airships that entered service as the war progressed. (FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM)



ABOVE: One of the seaplane tenders that participated in the Cuxhaven raid, HMS *Empress*, pictured having lowered one of its seaplanes on to the water. A second can be seen on the stern. (FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM)

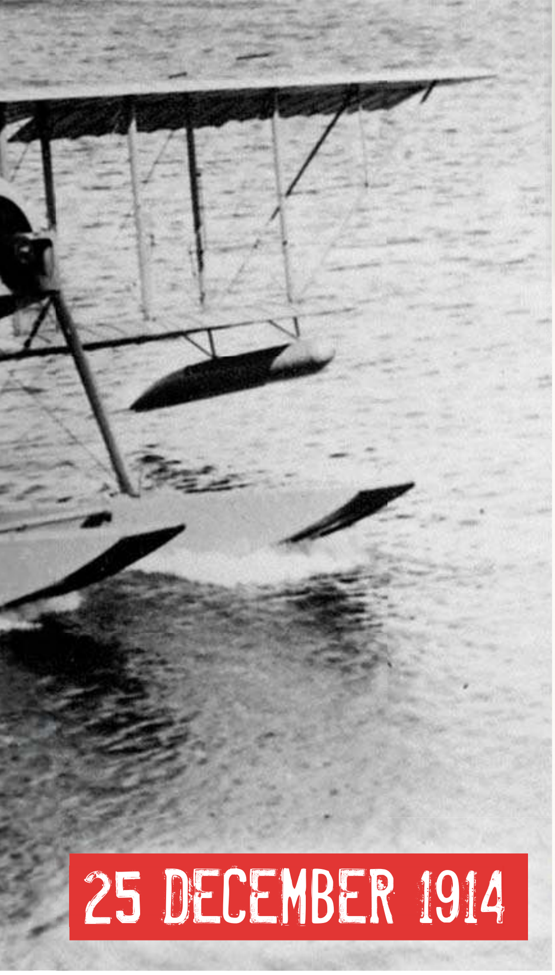


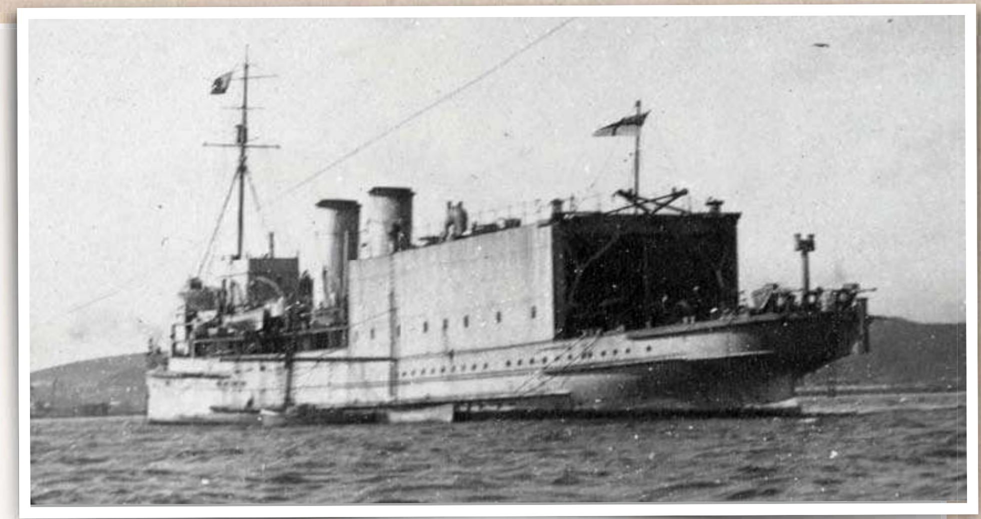
MAIN PICTURE BELOW: One of the seven Royal Naval Air Service aircraft which participated in the "Christmas Raid". This 160hp Short Admiralty Type 81 seaplane, RNAS serial number 119, was flown by Flight Commander Robert Ross and operated from HMS *Engadine*. Ross found the mouth of the River Elbe at 07.40 hours, and, from a height of 2,000 feet, spotted eight anchored merchant ships and what he believed was a hospital ship, "one of which fired at me, but the shot passed below". As with all the aircraft involved, Ross failed to locate the airship base, but eventually regained his tender and was recovered. (FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM) supply vessel, followed shortly afterwards by the merchantman *Princess Victoria*. Britain was building the first carrier fleet in naval history.

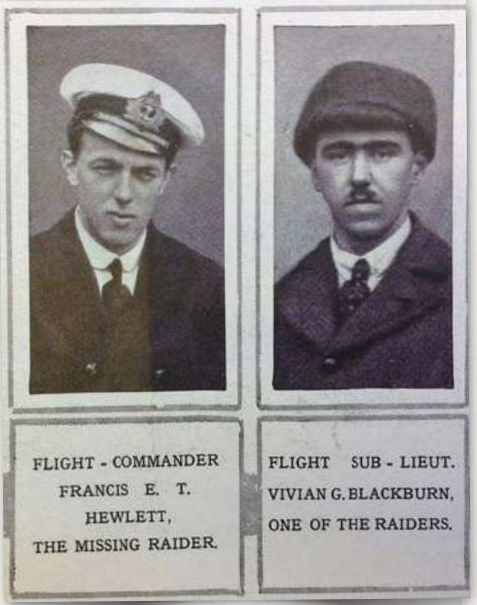
The plans for a raid against the main Zeppelin base near Cuxhaven were first considered towards the end of October 1914, but cancelled. The first successful attempt on Cuxhaven finally took place on 25 December, and therefore came to be known as the "Christmas Raid". For the attack, HMS *Engadine* was to carry three Admiralty Type 74 Folder seaplanes, HMS *Riviera* would have two Admiralty Type 135s and one Type 74, and HMS *Empress* three Type 74s.

The actual target at Cuxhaven was a massive "shed" which weighed 4,000 tons and was mounted on a large turntable that could be turned into the prevailing wind to launch the airships. The two Zeppelins it housed represented exactly half of the German naval fleet suitable for operations over the North Sea at that time.

The Cuxhaven operation, officially known as "Plan Y", called for the seaplanes to take off from a point north-east of Heligoland island and fly south-west to make a landfall in the vicinity of Cuxhaven. The seaplanes were to fly to the target independently, as formation flying on operations was as yet untried. After attacking the Zeppelins, the aircraft were then to undertake reconnaissance patrols before returning to the warships to be recovered. The seaplane carriers were to be supported by both surface vessels and submarines.

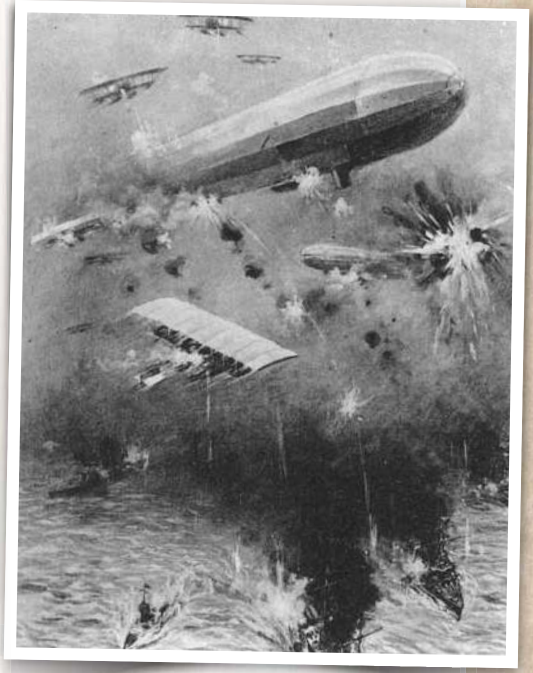



ABOVE: The seaplane tender HMS *Engadine* pictured at anchor. Launched on 23 September 1911 by William Denny & Brothers, *Engadine* had been built to operate on the Folkestone-Boulogne route. Requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1914, *Engadine* was converted for its new role by the construction of cranes and a hangar aft of the funnels. She was capable of operating four Short 184 floatplanes, though there was no flight deck, the aircraft being lowered onto the sea for takeoff and recovered again from the sea after landing. (FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM)


FLIGHT - COMMANDER
FRANCIS E. T.
HEWLETT,
THE MISSING RAIDER.

FLIGHT SUB - LIEUT.
VIVIAN G. BLACKBURN,
ONE OF THE RAIDERS.

ABOVE: When these images and captions were published on 2 January 1915, one of the pilots involved in the attack on Cuxhaven, Flight Commander Francis Hewlett, was listed as missing. At the controls of a Short Admiralty Type 135 seaplane (RNAS serial number 135), Hewlett suffered engine problems and was seen to ditch into the sea some eight miles off Heligoland. Hewlett was posted as missing, but had in fact been located by the Dutch trawler *Marta van Hattem*, which took him on board and returned him to port in Holland, where he disembarked on 2 January 1915. Hewlett eventually made his way back to the UK. (HMP)

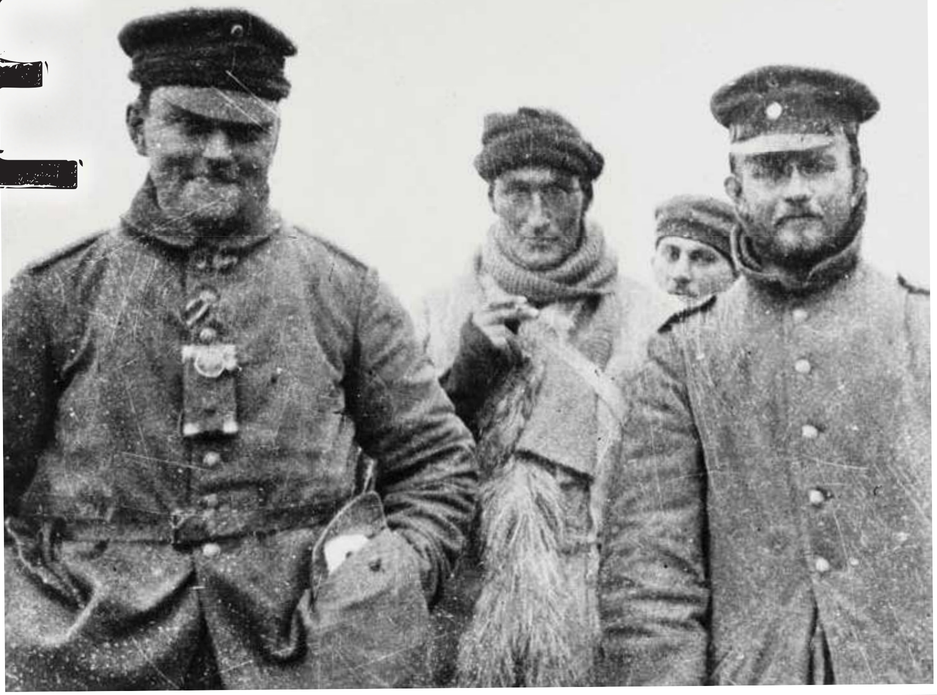

ABOVE: A highly stylized artist's depiction of the attack on Cuxhaven that appeared in a French newspaper at the time. Following the raid, *Flight Magazine* noted that "the Cuxhaven raid marks the first employment of the seaplanes of the Naval Air Service in an attack on the enemy's harbours from the sea, and, apart altogether from the results achieved, is an occasion of historical moment. Not only so, but for the first time in history a naval attack has been delivered simultaneously above, on, and from below the surface of the water." (HMP)

The small armada sailed from port on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Having reached the rendezvous point the next morning, the Royal Naval Air Service airmen climbed into their aircraft. However, two of the aircraft suffered engine problems before even taking off and the fog prevented any of the aircraft from spotting the Zeppelin shed. Of those pilots that did reach land, just one believed his aircraft had bombed the airship base, but it had in fact hit a fish-drying shed. The fog also deterred the German fleet from putting to sea and the desired fleet action did not materialise. The crews of all seven aircraft that had set off on the raid came back (some after being rescued from the water) and three of the aircraft were recovered.

The Cuxhaven raid was imaginative, innovative and daring. It paved the way for carrier-borne aerial strikes against land and sea targets which would become a common feature in the wars of the future. It was also a dismal failure. ●

THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE

25 DECEMBER 1914



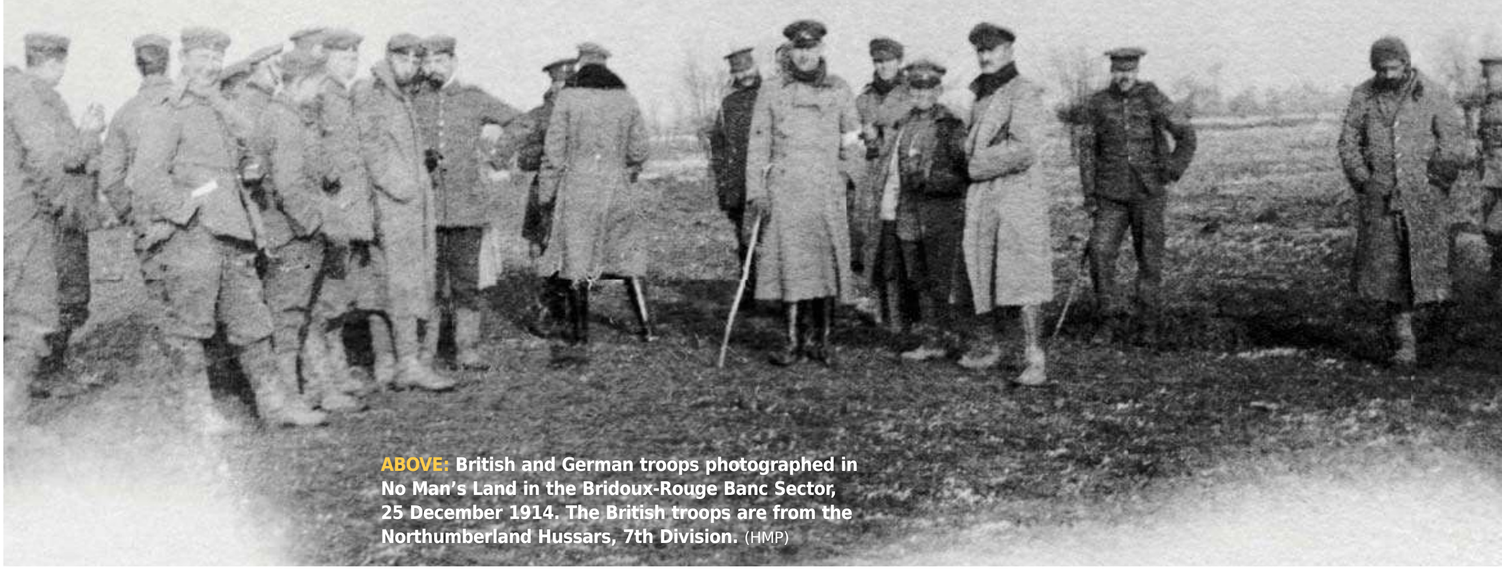
ABOVE: British and German troops pictured between the respective sets of front line trenches, near Ploegsteert, on 25 December 1914. According to the original caption, the British soldier between the two German officers is Private Turner of the 1st Battalion, London Rifle Brigade. (MARY EVANS/ROBERT HUNT COLLECTION)

DURING THURSDAY, 24 December 1914, the weather across the Western Front turned cold but dry. A hard frost fell across the trenches. As the day wore on, in some areas of the front British soldiers were astonished to see Christmas trees with candles and paper lanterns appearing on enemy parapets. Later that evening, and through the night, the singing of carols, hymns and popular songs added to the atmosphere.

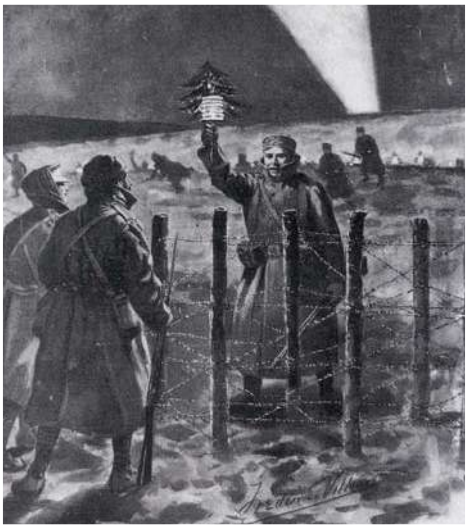
By the following day, the first Christmas of the Great War, a number of British and German soldiers found themselves in No Man's Land in an act of fraternisation that has since given rise to the legend that is The Christmas Truce. One of those present that day was Major John Hawksley who was serving with 135 Battery, Royal Field Artillery, near Ploegsteert Wood in the southern part of the Ypres Salient. On 27 December 1914, Hawksley wrote to his sister:

"Christmas day in our immediate front was quite extraordinary. I was at my observation post just a few yards behind the infantry advanced trenches on the afternoon of Xmas Eve. After dark our men & the Germans whose trenches were only 1 to 2 hundred yards apart sang in English Home sweet home together. Then God save the King was sung by both. I don't know what words the Germans sang to this tune. Then late on a German shouted out to the Warwicks – 'We won't fire tomorrow if tomorrow if you don't'. Our men shouted back 'All right'.

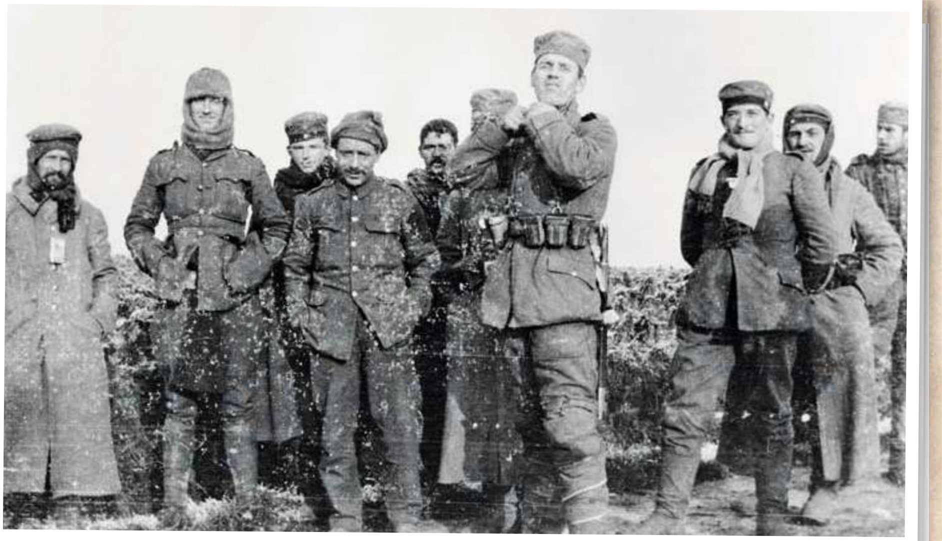
"When it was light on Xmas day, each side showed itself above the trenches. First head & shoulders then seeing they were not shot at – Showed a little more – until a German got out of his trench & then an Englishman did. Finally about 100 Germans & 60 Englishmen including officers on both sides stepped out & fraternized with each other!!"



ABOVE: British and German troops photographed in No Man's Land in the Bridoux-Rouge Banc Sector, 25 December 1914. The British troops are from the Northumberland Hussars, 7th Division. (HMP)



ABOVE: **This depiction of the Christmas Truce, entitled "The Light of Peace in the Trenches on Christmas Eve", was first published in the British press on 9 January 1915.** (HMP)



ABOVE: **German soldiers photographed by Second Lieutenant Cyril A.F. Drummond, Royal Field Artillery, with men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in No Man's Land during the Christmas Truce. At least one account states that this was a picture taken on Boxing Day. Drummond later wrote: "They were very nice fellows to look at ... and one of them said, 'we don't want to kill you and you don't want to kill us. So why shoot? ... I lined them all up and took a photograph."** (IWM; HU35801)

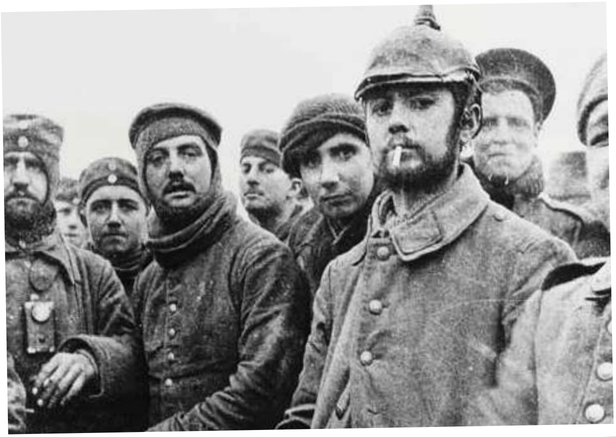
In November 2006, the singer and song writer Chris de Burgh purchased a poignant piece of First World War history at an auction in London. The document, which he paid the sum of £14,400, consisted of five pencilled pages from an army-issue notebook and was a graphic and uncensored account of the Christmas Truce of 1914. Written in the trenches by an unknown British soldier, this witness said:

"This will be the most memorable Christmas I've ever spent or likely to spend: since about tea time yesterday I don't think there's been a shot fired on either side up to now ... Some of our chaps went over to their lines. I think they've all come back bar one from 'E' Coy."

On Christmas morning, he wrote, breakfast was followed by "a game of football at the back of our trenches! We've had a few Germans over to see us this morning. They also sent a party over to bury a sniper we shot in the week. He was about a 100 yards from our trench. A few of our fellows went out and helped to bury him."

The meal that evening was one which most men on the front line would be unlikely to eat again for the duration: "Our dinner ... started off with fried bacon and dip-bread, followed by hot Xmas Pudding ... Next item on the menu was muscatels and almonds, oranges, bananas, chocolate etc. followed by cocoa and smokes. Just before dinner I had the pleasure of shaking hands with several Germans: a party of them came halfway over to us so several of us went out to them. I exchanged one of my balaclavas for a hat. I've also got a button off one of their tunics. We also exchanged smokes etc. and had a decent chat. They say they won't fire tomorrow if we don't so I suppose we shall get a bit of a holiday – perhaps ... We can hardly believe that we've been firing at them for the last week or two – it all seems so strange".

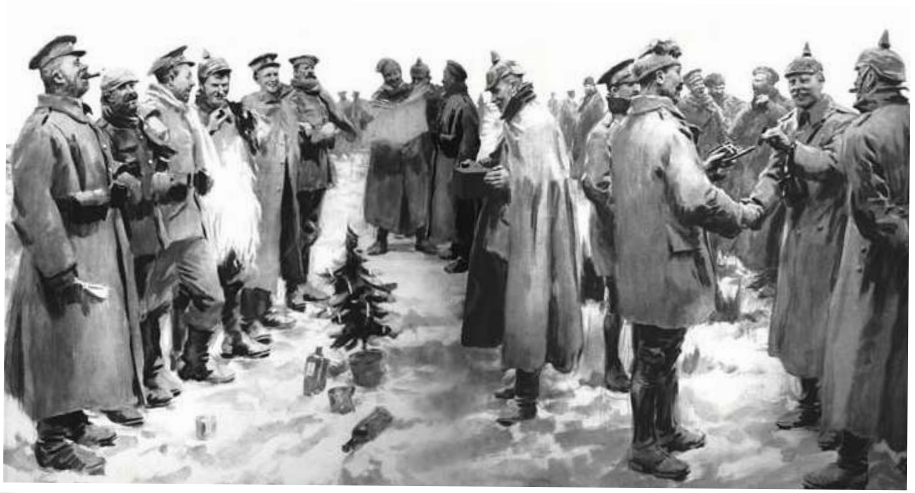
The Christmas Truce did not occur along the whole front. In the belief that a truce was "supposed to be prevailing", Private Ernest Palfrey, a 21-year-old former miner, had been out into No Man's Land with a group burying their dead comrades. As he returned to the Monmouthshires' trenches he was hit by a "bullet in the back of his neck which killed him instantly".



ABOVE: **A snapshot taken by Rifleman R.W. Turner, on his "pocket camera", showing German and British troops fraternising on the Western Front during the Christmas Truce. It is one of a series of shots that were subsequently sent by Rifleman J. Selby Grigg to London newspapers for publication. Both Turner and Grigg were serving with the London Rifle Brigade. The Germans are purported to be Saxons from the 104th and 106th Regiments.** (© ROBERT HUNT LIBRARY/MARY EVANS)

Similar circumstances surrounded the death of one of the Sergeants in Palfrey's battalion. Frank Collins, who hailed from Monmouth, had made his way across No Man's Land with tobacco and jam to present to the Germans opposite. During the return journey he was shot through the back and died almost immediately. It was reported in a South Wales paper that the Germans later sent over an apology.

These two men were not alone. On 25 December 1914, forty-one British soldiers were listed killed in action on the Western Front. Only eight days throughout the whole month saw worse losses. ●



ABOVE: **A contemporary artist's depiction of the Christmas Truce underway on 25 December 1914.** (HMP)

THE PRINCESS MARY'S GIFT BOX

LAUNCHED ON 14 October 1914, by HRH The Princess Victoria Alexandra Alice Mary, the Christmas Gift Fund would lead to one of the most enduring mementos of the First World War – the Princess Mary's Gift Box.

Princess Mary's original intention had been to pay, out of her private allowance, for a personal gift to each soldier and sailor for the first Christmas of the war. Instead, she was persuaded to give her name to a public fund which would raise the necessary monies to pay for the gifts.

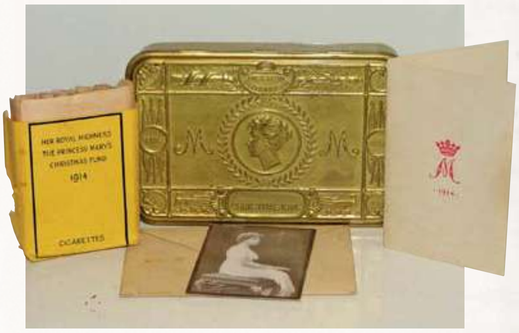
It was intended that recipients would receive an embossed brass box inside which would be one ounce of pipe tobacco, twenty cigarettes, a pipe, a tinder lighter, Christmas card and photograph of the Princess. A number of representations were made, resulting in a number of variations being made available for "special groups".

For the biggest of these "special groups", the non-smokers, it was decided their brass boxes would contain, as well as the obligatory Christmas card and photograph, a packet of acid tablets, a khaki writing case containing pencil, paper and envelopes. For the Indian Army, the Gurkhas were to receive the same gift as the British troops, Sikhs would be sent the box filled with sugar candy, a quantity of spices and the Christmas card, whilst for all other Indian troops, it was the box with a packet of cigarettes and sugar candy, spices and the card. Nurses at the front were provided with the box, a packet of chocolate and the card.

ABOVE: **Troops at a camp in the UK receive their Princess Mary gift tins.** (HMP)

The recipients were split into one of three classes in order to prioritize delivery of the gifts. Class A included all those men in the Navy or troops at the front, the wounded in hospitals and men on furlough, prisoners and men interned (for whom the gift was reserved), and widows or parents of those who had been killed. Members of this class were to receive the gift on (or as near as possible) Christmas Day. In Class B were all British, Colonial and Indian troops serving outside the British Isles, whilst Class C included all other troops in the British Isles.

In January 1915, the final number of gifts supplied was revealed. By the end of 25 December 1914, it was announced, some 355,716 had gone to the BEF (putting an intense strain on the British supply train), 66,168 to the men at home either on furlough or sick leave, 4,600 to the French Mission to the BEF and 1,390 to members of the various army nursing services. This made a grand total of 426,724 gifts. ●



ABOVE: **An example of one of the Princess Mary gift tins and some of its contents.** (THE JAMES LUTO COLLECTION)

BELOW: **Men of the Army Service Corps at a camp in south-eastern England with their Princess Mary gift tins.** (IWM; Q53478)

25 DECEMBER 1914

MILITARY CROSS INSTITUTED

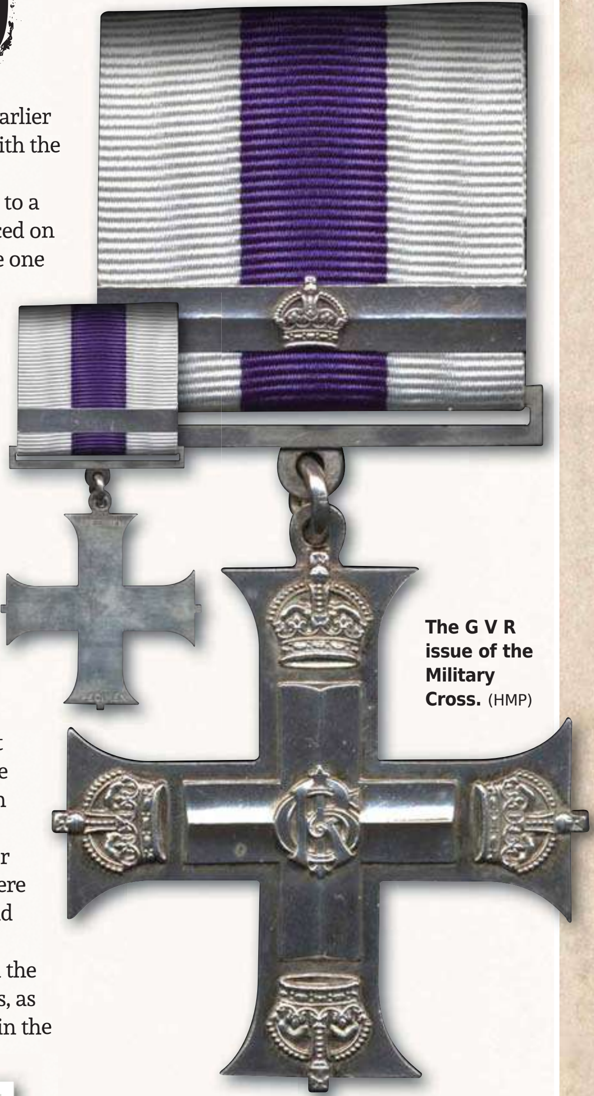
28 DECEMBER 1914

A ROYAL warrant giving approval for a new gallantry award called the Military Cross was given on Monday, 28 December 1915. The announcement was published in *The London Gazette* four days later. In this, it was stated: "Whereas We have taken into Our Royal consideration the distinguished services in time of War of Officers of certain ranks in our Army; and whereas we are desirous of signifying our appreciation of such services ... [We] institute and create a Cross to be awarded to Officers whose distinguished and meritorious services have been brought to Our notice."

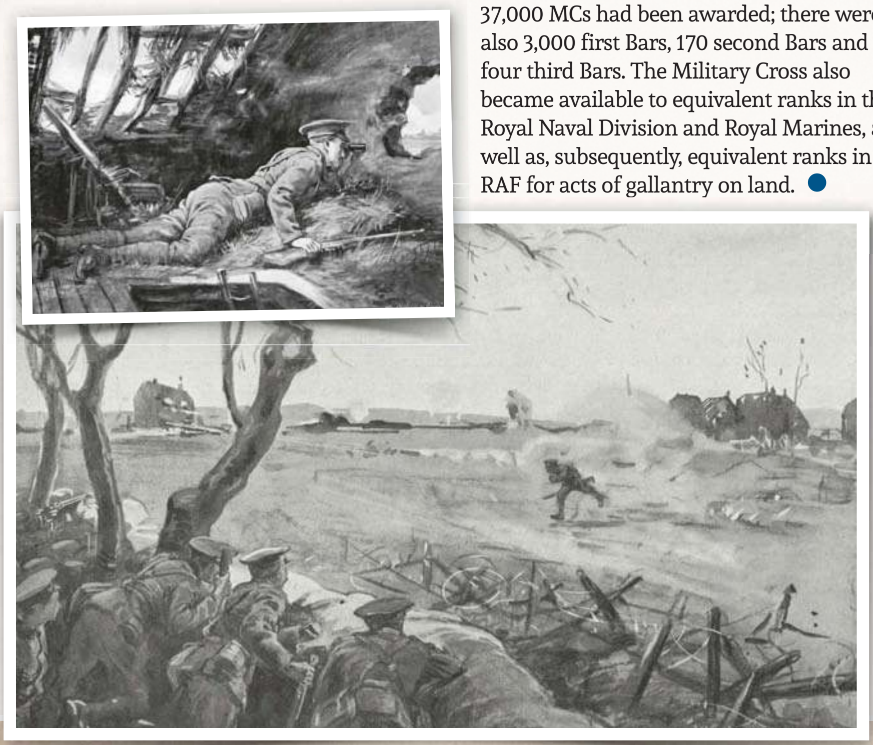
The Military Cross was, therefore, to be issued for gallantry in the presence of the enemy to junior officers of the Army who were ineligible, on account of their rank, for the Distinguished Service Order. Cast in silver, this ornamental cross is 46mm in height and 44mm in diameter and is suspended from a plain suspension bar. The obverse of the MC has straight arms terminating in broad finials ornamented with Imperial Crowns. At the centre of the cross is the Royal Cypher of the reigning sovereign. The reverse is plain, but from 1937 the name of the year of issue has been engraved on the lower limb of the cross (though a number of earlier awards have been privately engraved with the year and/or the recipient's name).

The first awards of the Military Cross, to a total of ninety-nine men, were announced on 1 January 1915. Amongst those to receive one of the these awards was Captain The Hon. William Cecil. Serving in the 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards, Cecil, a career soldier, was sent to France just eight days after the outbreak of war. Aged 28, Cecil was shot and killed by a German sniper on 16 September 1914, during the Battle of the Aisne. In *The Times* of 3 October 1914, Private W. Scott, Grenadier Guards, who was in hospital at the time, was reported as stating: "The captain fell a few yards from where I was, and I was wounded quarter of an hour later. It will be my sad duty when I recover to deliver Captain Cecil's belongings to his family. The sword was probably that of some ancestor. On it are inscribed the names of several battles, beginning with Waterloo."

By the end of the First World War, over 37,000 MCs had been awarded; there were also 3,000 first Bars, 170 second Bars and four third Bars. The Military Cross also became available to equivalent ranks in the Royal Naval Division and Royal Marines, as well as, subsequently, equivalent ranks in the RAF for acts of gallantry on land. ●



The G V R issue of the Military Cross. (HMP)



LEFT and ABOVE LEFT: **On 26 October 1914, the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards was located to the north of Gheluvelt during the First Battle of Ypres. Company Sergeant-Major Joseph Barwick was engaged in sniping from the upper portion of a damaged cottage in advance of the British front line trenches. Whilst undertaking his task, seen here above left, he noticed that German troops had broken through on the right of the position occupied by his battalion, which would necessitate an immediate change of front. Barwick set out to run back and warn his company commander. In order to do so he had to traverse a distance of some 300 yards, over open ground, in full view of the enemy – as depicted on the left. But, though bullets were whistling past his head all the time, he reached the trenches without mishap, and having made his report, volunteered to go back to the battalion HQ, 800 yards distant, for reinforcements. For his actions, Barwick received an early award of the Military Cross.** (HMP)

THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR

IT HAD long been obvious that the war would not be over by Christmas and many hard lessons had been learnt in those first few terrible months of fighting. Nevertheless, despite the many setbacks suffered by Britain and her allies, as 1914 drew to a close there were genuine reasons for believing that the war would soon be won.

The first was that the Schlieffen plan was in ruins and that the Germans had no real alternative operation they could undertake. There was clearly no longer any possibility of them breaking through the French or British lines. Indeed it was said that life in Paris continued as if there was not a foreign soldier on French soil.

Equally, the blockade of the German ports was effectively controlled by the Royal Navy and all the German surface raiders had been driven off the seas. Further afield, the oilfields of the Persian Gulf were largely in British hands and, with the exception of Lettow-Vorbeck's determined resistance, the threat from the German colonies had been neutralised.

There had been one development towards the end of 1914, however, that was a cause for considerable concern. This was the Ottoman Empire's decision to align itself with the Central Powers. Even before their declaration of war the Turks had began operations against Russia, Britain and France's partner in the Triple Entende. Russia was already struggling to contain the German forces on the Eastern Front and a thrust into southern Russia by the Turks might compel Russia to seek peace.

The coming year would therefore see Britain and France mounting an offensive against the Turks to help Russia. The Germans also needed to be driven from France and Belgium.

The enemy had been stopped in his tracks in 1914. In 1915 the war would be taken to the enemy.

1914 IN NUMBERS

Number of personnel in the Army by 31 December 1914	1,686,980
BEF Casualties in France and Flanders	
Killed	18,174
Wounded	50,969
Missing and Prisoners of War	26,511
Total	95,654
Royal Navy Casualties (killed, wounded, missing and PoW)	6,109
British Army Expenditure	£240,712,541
Number of enemy troops captured	6,367
Air raid casualties in the UK	
Killed	0
Wounded	0
Number of remounts (replacement horses) for the Army	25,000
Output of rifles	120,093
Output of machine-guns	274
Number of filled shells manufactured	526,300

The most iconic Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery or memorial linked to the fighting of 1914 is undoubtedly St. Symphorien Military Cemetery near Mons, which was established by the German Army during the First World War. (CWGC)

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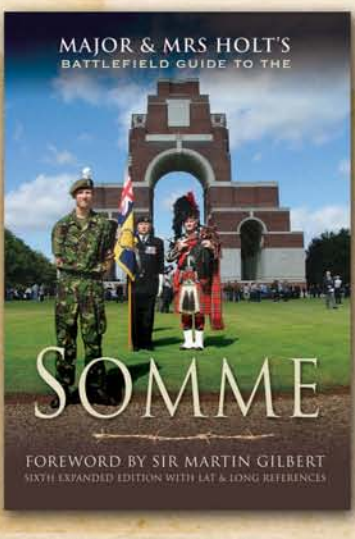
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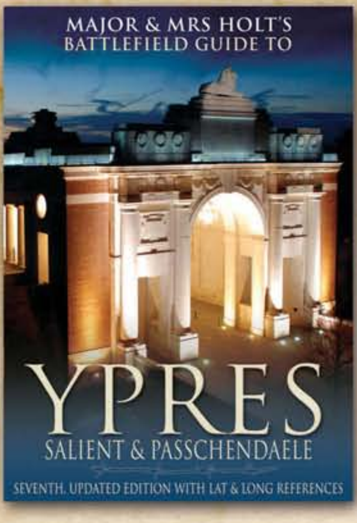
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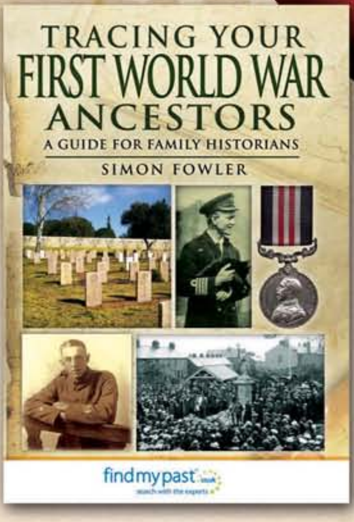
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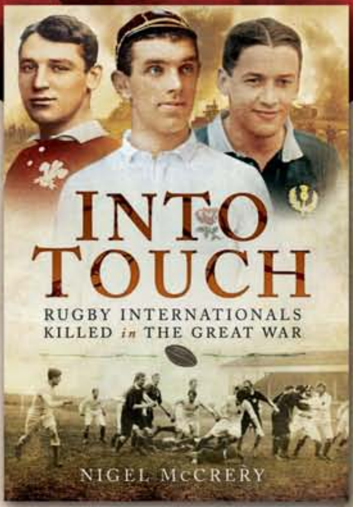
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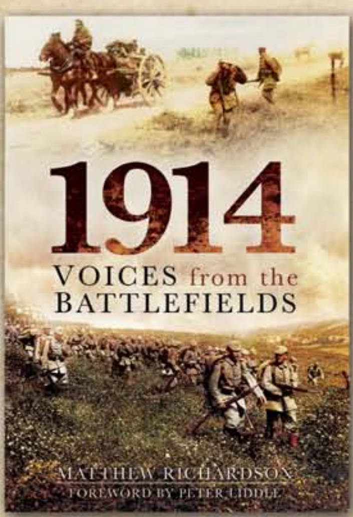
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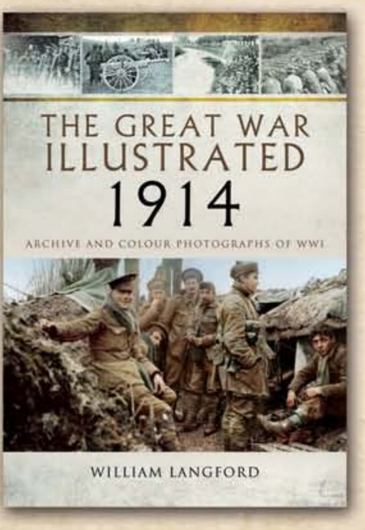
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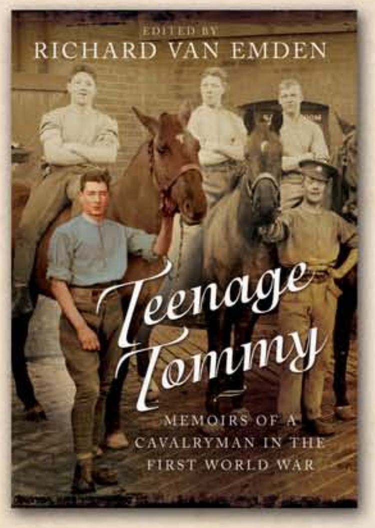
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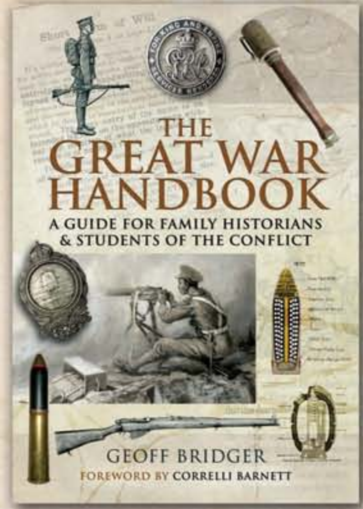
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